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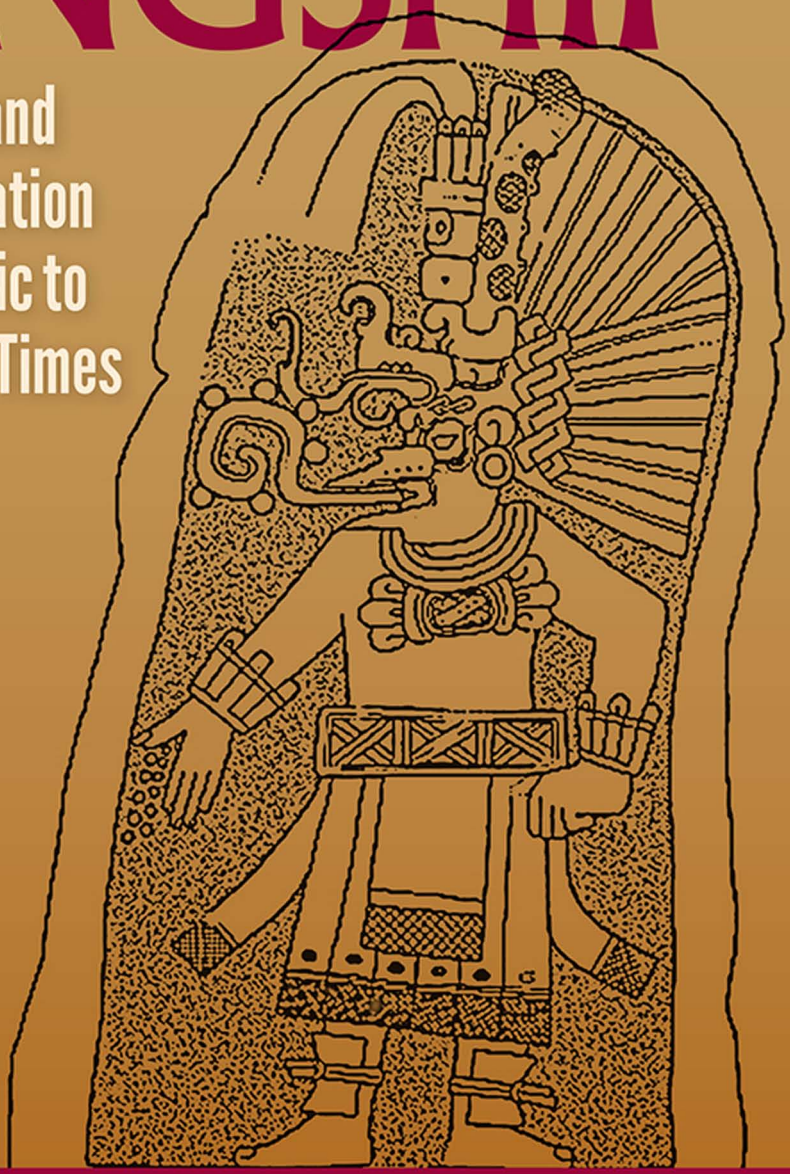
MAYA KINGSHIP

Rupture and Transformation from Classic to Postclassic Times



Edited by Tsubasa Okoshi, Arlen F. Chase, Philippe Nondédéo, and M. Charlotte Arnauld

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Edited by Tsubasa Okoshi, Arlen F. Chase, Philippe Nondédéo, and M. Charlotte Arnauld

Foreword by Diane Z. Chase and Arlen F. Chase

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Contents

List of Figures ix
List of Tables xiii
Foreword xv
Acknowledgments xix

1. Changes in Maya Rulership at the End of the Classic Period: An Introduction 1
M. Charlotte Arnauld, Tsubasa Okoshi, Arlen F. Chase, and Philippe Nondédéo

Part I. Theories

2. *K'uhul Ajaw* and Sacred Kings: Historicity and Change in Sacred Royalty / Divine Kingship Societies 21
Chloé Andrieu

Part II. Warring Kingdoms

3. Nostalgic Kings: The Rhetoric of Terminal Classic Maya Inscriptions 35
Nikolai Grube
4. Waves of Political Ruptures during the Terminal Classic in the Pasión and Other Regions of the Maya Lowlands 51
Takeshi Inomata
5. Warriors and the Transformation of Classic Maya Kingship: A Diachronic Analysis of Lithic Weapons in Copán, Honduras, and in Aguateca and Ceibal, Guatemala 64
Kazuo Aoyama
6. From Kings to Nobles: The Political-Historical Context of Naachtun at the End of the Classic Period 86
Philippe Nondédéo, Julien Sion, Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, Ignacio Cases, and Julien Hiquet

7. Deciphering the Collapse: An Account of Kingship in the Terminal Classic 106
Christophe Helmke, Julie A. Hoggarth, and Jaime J. Awe

Part III. Southern Lowlands, Shifting Societies, and Economies

8. Classic to Postclassic Maya Rulership: Changes in Military-Courtly Institutions 133
M. Charlotte Arnauld

9. Reconstructing an Ancient State from Its Bones, People, and Households: A Bioarchaeological Perspective on Late Classic Copán, Honduras 152
Shintaro Suzuki and Ana Luisa Izquierdo

10. Palatial Architecture and Political Order in the Maya Lowlands at the End of the Eighth Century 167
Tomás Barrientos Q.

11. Title, Space, and Architecture: Negotiating Kingship in the Classic Maya Dynasty of El Palmar, Mexico 185
Kenichiro Tsukamoto and Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín

https://www.academia.edu/45685943/Strength_in_the_face_of_adversity_Terminal_Classic_development_of_Nakum_in_a_wider_geopolitical_vantage

12. Strength in the Face of Adversity: Terminal Classic Development of Nakum in a Wider Geopolitical Vantage 202
Jarosław Źrałka, Bernard Hermes, Christophe Helmke, and Simon Martin

https://caracol.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ACDC2021-Transformation-of-Maya-Rulership.pdf

13. The Transformation of Maya Rulership at Caracol, Belize 224
Arlen F. Chase and Diane Z. Chase

Part IV. The Northern Trajectory

14. Stranger-Kings in Northern Yucatan 249
William Ringle, Tomás Gallareta Negrón, and George Bey III

15. Rulers at Chichen Itza at the End of the Classic Period: Their Continuity as Seen in Iconography and Architecture 269
Rafael Cobos

https://caracol.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/DCAC2021-Rupture-and-Postclassic.pdf

16. The Rupture of Classic Maya Divine Kingship from the Perspective of Postclassic Archaeology, Iconography, and Ethnohistory 291
Diane Z. Chase and Arlen F. Chase

17. Colonial Maya Discourse on the Rupture and Transformation or Continuity of Pre-Columbian Kingship: An Ethnohistorical Analysis 311
Tsubasa Okoshi

Discussion

18. The Collapse of the Southern Lowland Classic Maya City-States: Dynastic Disaster and Network Failure 327
Arthur Demarest, Bart Victor, Chloé Andrieu, and Paola Torres

19. The Rupture and Transformation of Maya Kingship: An Epilogue 349
Arlen F. Chase, M. Charlotte Arnauld, Diane Z. Chase, Philippe Nondédéo, and Tsubasa Okoshi

References 357
List of Contributors 433
Index 437

https://www.academia.edu/68333696/The_Rupture_and_Transformation_of_Maya_Kingship

Figures

0.1. Ceibal Stela 19 xviii
0.2. Participants of International Symposium held in Kyoto, Japan xix
1.1. Map of the Maya area 4
3.1. War events in relation to the *katun* periods of Maya history 38
3.2. Caracol Altar 12, dating to 9.19.10.0.0 (820 CE) 40
3.3. Caracol Altar 13, dating to 9.19.10.0.0 (820 CE) 41
3.4. Altar de los Reyes Altar 3, from 9.18.10.0.0 (800 CE) 43
3.5. Caracol Stela 17 associated with Altar 10 47
3.6. Caracol Altar 10 associated with Stela 17 48
4.1. First wave of disruption 53
4.2. Second wave of disruption 54
4.3. Third wave of disruption 56
5.1. Chert and obsidian points from Aguateca, Guatemala 68
5.2. Examples of use-wear on chert bifacial points from Aguateca 69
5.3. Obsidian and chert points from the Copán region, Honduras 73
5.4. The depiction of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' 75
5.5. Excavations of the Terminal Classic royal palace at Ceibal 82
6.1. Map of the Naachtun epicenter 88
6.2. Map of Naachtun Group B 91
6.3. Map of Naachtun epicenter showing the Terminal Classic occupation 98
6.4. Map of northern Peten and southern Campeche 100
7.1. Map of the eastern central lowlands 109
7.2. The two latest monuments of the eastern central lowlands 110

7.3. Chart illustrating the absolute incidence and diachronic distribution of narrative themes 113
7.4. The Komkom Vase discovered at Baking Pot, Belize 116
7.5. The segment of the Komkom Vase 120
7.6. Diachronic distribution of narrative themes in the monumental record 122
8.1. Locational map of La Joyanca and Zapote Bobal and their relationship to Dos Pilas and Tikal 137
8.2. The king as the sacrificer: Stela 8 of Naranjo, erected in 800 CE by "Itzamnaaj" K'awil; Stela 11 of Piedras Negras, 731 CE 143
8.3. The front and sides of Stela 31 erected at Tikal 144
8.4. Royal military iconography: Stela 2 of Aguateca, 735 CE; Panel 2 of Piedras Negras, 658 and 667 CE 146
8.5. Long halls located in public spaces close to the royal palace at: Comalcalco; Edzna, the Noh'och'na; Dzibilchaltun, Structure 44 148
9.1. Ground plan from the urban core of Copán 155
9.2. Maps of the three groups under study 155
9.3. Conical distribution of status scores both in the main dwellings and in the adjacent areas 159
10.1. Plan of Cancuen's palatial complex 172
10.2. Hypothetical reconstruction of Structure L7-9 south facade and its plan 174
10.3. Comparative chart of Cancuen's palatial complex and other Maya palaces 181
11.1. Map of El Palmar showing the location of the Main Group and the Guzmán Group 189
11.2. Drawing of Altar 10 191
11.3. Rollout drawing of the El Señor del Peten vase 194
11.4. Hieroglyphic stairway at the Guzmán Group 198
12.1. Map of the Triangle Park and its surroundings 203
12.2. Map of Nakum showing two major sectors of the site 206
12.3. Map of the Southern Sector of Nakum featuring the Acropolis and other neighboring structures 207

12.4. Reconstruction of the Nakum Acropolis and surrounding structures during the Terminal Classic; reconstruction of Structure G 208

12.5. Ninth-century monuments from the Central Plaza of Nakum 216

12.6. View of the Northern Sector of Nakum featuring the location of Structure 82, Stela 5, and West Group; Stela 5; hieroglyphic bench from Nakum Structure 89 218

13.1. Terminal Classic ceramics from Caracol 235

13.2. Terminal Classic *incensarios* from Caracol 236

13.3. Caracol carved and incised monuments dating to 9.18.10.0.0 (800 CE) 239

13.4. Caracol carved monuments dating to 9.19.0.0.0 (810 CE) 240

13.5. Caracol carved monuments dating to 9.19.10.0.0 (820 CE) 242

13.6. Caracol carved monuments dating to the Tenth Cycle 243

14.1. Early Puuc architectural types 253

14.2. Hypertrophic examples of *popol nah* architecture 257

14.3. Examples of public buildings with tripartite facades in northern Yucatan 262

15.1. Location of Chichen Itza and other northern Maya Lowland sites 271

15.2. Captain Sun Disk, El Castillo north lintel—south side, and upper Temple of the Jaguars lintel; K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent; K'uk'ulkan associated with a featherless serpent with thick hooks, and a feathered serpent with large spines 272

15.3. Representations of Captain Sun Disk and three K'uk'ulkan warrior-rulers 275

15.4. The Great Terrace before and after the construction of the Great Ball Court 280

15.5. Chichen Itza and its maritime transshipment seaports 288

16.1. Maya Postclassic polities derived from ethnohistoric sources 294

16.2. Aspergillums as symbols of authority in the Terminal Classic southern lowlands 297

16.3. Aspergillums as symbols of authority in the northern lowlands at Mayapan 299

16.4. Santa Rita Corozal Structure 81, an example of a Postclassic *principal* house 301

16.5. Gold and turquoise earrings from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 216 and a photograph of the burial with which they are associated 303

16.6. Painted cache vessel from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 81 305

16.7. Figurine cache representing the creation of the Maya world from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 213 306

16.8. Photograph of central figure from the creation cache in Santa Rita Corozal Structure 213 307

16.9. Drawing of a seated warrior figure 308

17.1. Locations of all mentioned sites 313

18.1. A heuristic schematic of the layered nature of causality 330

18.2. Part of the extensive agricultural terrace systems of Caracol 335

18.3. Some of the centers that experienced dynastic termination rituals at the end of the Classic period 345

Tables

5.1. Pointed chipped stone tools from Ceibal, Guatemala 81

6.1. Chart of Naachtun occupation in the epicenter 94

7.1. The last century of historical data for the eastern central lowlands 111

7.2. Summary of the chronology and main events recorded in the text of Komkom Vase 118

7.3. Tabulation of dated events in the eastern central lowlands 125

9.1. Burial sample from Classic Copán, Honduras 156

9.2. One of the key results of dental caries prevalence from the Late Classic sample (Núñez Chinchilla group) 160

9.3. One of the key results of comparisons of maximum stature in the Late Classic sample (Núñez Chinchilla and 9N-8 groups) 160

9.4. One of the key results of long bone morphology from the Classic Copán sample (10J45 group, Núñez Chinchilla group, and 9N-8 group) 162

9.5. One of the key results of long bone morphology from the Late Classic Copán sample (Núñez Chinchilla group and 9N-8 group) 163

10.1. Cancuen's chronology, including the palace's construction episodes 175

11.1. List of the El Palmar successive kings and their corresponding *lakam* elites at the hieroglyphic stairway of the Guzmán Group 196

12.1. List of radiocarbon dates associated with Terminal Classic Chumuk phase at Nakum 205

13.1. Caracol, Belize: Terminal Classic dates, monuments, and iconography 231

15.1. Chichen Itza's paramount rulers and their proposed historical sequence between the ninth and eleventh centuries 276

Foreword

The "Classic Maya collapse" and the associated societal changes that occurred in the central lowlands of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize from the late eighth through early tenth centuries CE are among the most mythologized aspects of New World prehistory. It has been romanticized as an example of a failed civilization, analysis of which can hold lessons and parables for our own modern world. Yet the events and processes that transpired in conjunction with this past tipping point are only now beginning to be understood. This volume offers a major step forward in detailing the processes and events behind the rupture and transformation of Maya society from the late eighth through early tenth centuries.

As originally formulated, a sudden Maya collapse was predicated largely on a single body of data—carved stelae with hieroglyphic dates that could provide an indication of the final occupation for a given Maya site. Dated stone monuments ceased being produced by the Maya long count date of 10.3.0.0.0 (corresponding to 889 CE) at most sites in the southern lowlands; more recently, this dating has been extended an additional two decades to 10.4.0.0.0 (909 CE) in the southern lowlands and perhaps slightly later in the northern lowlands. For early researchers who did not have the benefit of later work, such as J.E.S. Thompson and Sylvanus G. Morley, this cessation of monument erection appeared to suggest a calamitous end to southern Lowland Maya civilization. The southern lowland collapse was viewed as having resulted from one or more processes or events experienced uniformly throughout the southern lowlands that led to the complete abandonment of most cities. The northern lowlands lacked the large corpus of dated stelae and altars that existed in the south, making this region more difficult to place into an interpretive framework. Generally, however, the northern lowland collapse was viewed as being more protracted, potentially because of the existence of still vibrant Maya populations and due to ethnohistorical documents that indicated substantial Maya populations in this area before

and after the Spanish conquest in 1542 CE. Thus, while a collapse was posited for the south, different models were offered to explain the continuous populations in the northern lowlands. Southern populations were suggested by some to have migrated to the northern lowlands (either voluntarily or forced) as part of a "New Empire" based in the Puuc region. Researchers, for example, Alfred M. Tozzer and Ralph L. Roys, positioned Chichen Itza as the dominant center for the Early Postclassic period and Mayapan as the primary Late Postclassic period capital. Some of the frameworks applied to the northern lowlands were based on assumptions derived from allegorical and mythical passages in native documents about populations coming into the Yucatan Peninsula from elsewhere in Mexico. Thus, first the "Toltec" (Tozzer) and then later the "Putun" (Thompson) were incorporated into explanations for the rise of the great city of Chichen Itza. Yet these reconstructions were originally formulated without solid dating and with very little input from archaeological data. This non-overlapping sequence subsequently has been reframed based on newer archaeological data.

This volume examines the Maya collapse in greater archaeological detail, focusing on the spatial and temporal parameters of divine kingship, as derived from the epigraphic texts and iconographic portrayals, and then conjoining this information with the archaeological records of different cities and regions to gain a better understanding of the events and processes that transpired between the seventh through tenth centuries. Divine kingship has been viewed as being the basal structure upon which Classic Maya polities were established. But divine kingship was not uniform throughout the span of the Classic Period at all centers. It may have been more autocratic at some centers and more bureaucratic in others; it also could change over time within the same polity (e.g., Caracol where divine kingship dissipated in the late seventh century but returned in strength at the end of the eighth century). The archaeological record makes it evident that transformations of this form of political leadership impacted diverse parts of the Maya Lowlands at different times. Various centers grew to political prominence through successful warfare events only to eventually be defeated by their enemies. Some warfare events were meaningful enough to either bolster or undermine the power of a divine king. And while the populations at some cities survived defeat by implementing different systems of governance, other centers could not do this and were abandoned; in still other cases some abandoned cities were subsequently reoccupied. What is important in this scenario is that these processes occurred at different times for each center and were presumably due to causes that were at least to some degree relatively unique to each

city and region. Thus, the events and processes that preceded the Classic Maya collapse were never uniformly applied throughout the entire Maya area.

No matter the case, significant alterations were made both to the institution of divine kingship and to the populations impacted by this governing strategy in the later part of the Late Classic period. Data from both epigraphy and archaeology show that divine kingship, as a ruling strategy, did not survive past the tenth century in the Maya Lowlands. Subsequent Postclassic period governance structures took other forms.

Equally important, however, is that the ancient Maya were in contact with each other and that the events in one polity impacted others. The Late Classic Maya world had become enmeshed in a highly interconnected system characterized by a globalized economy in which no city was entirely self-sufficient. Instead, by Late Classic times many polities and cities in the southern lowlands were dependent on far-flung trading networks for a variety of necessary goods, services, and, in some cases, foodstuffs. Thus, any shock to a member of the broader network or system would have had ramifications beyond the local arena. And multiple shocks could have caused the system to become unhinged. While drought and crop failures associated with climate change may have caused local pressures, the overall system was likely able to compensate. However, stresses due to religious conversion and proselytization or to external military action would have had more far-reaching consequences. Both religious conversion and successful military action would have directly impacted the stability of divine kings, effectively undermining the broader intertwined system.

The Classic Maya collapse did not happen rapidly or uniformly. It was the result of long-term processes and events tied to a multitude of factors and variables. This book presents some of the complex situations that can be defined by combining archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic data. It showcases the importance of multiple datasets and multiple factors in understanding change and underscores the relevance of studying the past to better comprehend the present and future.

Diane Z. Chase and Arlen F. Chase
Series Editors

Figure 0.1. Ceibal Stela 19 illustrates the changes occurring relative to Maya kingship in the Terminal Classic Period (Seibal, Stela 19, drawing by Ian Graham © President and Fellows of Harvard College, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, PM 2004.15.6.17.19).

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Figure 0.2. Participants of the International Symposium held November 11–14, 2017, at the Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Kyoto, Japan.

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1

Changes in Maya Rulership at the End of the Classic Period

An Introduction

M. CHARLOTTE ARNAULD, TSUBASA OKOSHI, ARLEN F. CHASE, AND PHILIPPE NONDÉDÉO

From 760 to 810 CE, one-fourth of the Classic Maya cities (among those that have been investigated) suddenly lost their royal dynasties. Palaces were abandoned; no more stone monuments were erected; no more inscriptions were carved using a calendric date in the Classic Long Count notational system. Even though most of these cities were not immediately depopulated, their inhabitants ceased to build large masonry temples and residences; and, within one hundred years, the residents of these sites gradually emigrated to other settlements as the cities themselves were returned to the forest. While this was happening, even more cities saw the abrupt demise of their own dynasties and their own eventual abandonment. A few cities survived, but generally, by 950 CE, the entire system of capitals, towns, and villages throughout much of the Maya area had been displaced. Some populations resettled around lakes, on the shores of rivers, and on seacoasts and their proximate hinterlands in the Yucatan Peninsula. Thus, during those disastrous times (750–950 CE) between the Classic (250–950 CE) and Postclassic (950–1540 CE) periods, a widespread political collapse occurred (Culbert 1973; Demarest et al., eds. 2004; Houston and Inomata 2009:288–319; Turner and Sabloff 2012; see also Aimers 2007; Arnauld and Breton 2013; Arnauld et al. 2017) from which only limited parts of the Maya Lowlands ever fully recovered (Turner 2018).

Much attention has been given to the general causality of this major disjunction, highlighting the advent of droughts in a climatic change (e.g.,

Douglas et al. 2016; Gill et al. 2007; Hodell et al. 1995; Iannone 2014; Kennett et al. 2012; Lucero 2002). A subsequent Postclassic settlement system that was concentrated on coasts and lakes (Chase and Rice 1985:6) suggests that, while droughts may have impacted Maya societies, climate alone was not responsible for the political turmoil at the end of the Classic period (Haldon et al. 2018; Turner and Sabloff 2012). Other often mentioned causes for this diaspora are social unrest (Hamblin and Pitcher 1980; Lowe 1982), generalized environmental degradation (e.g., Diamond 2005; Dunning et al. 2012; Heckbert 2013; McNeil et al. 2010), and possibly economic collapse (D. Chase and A. Chase 2017; Demarest et al. 2014). Demographic trends during this era have been assessed (e.g., Culbert 1988; Culbert and Rice 1990; Roman et al. 2018); anthropological models have been applied (Tainter 1988); and multifactorial models have been built that make the most of available data (e.g., Chase and Scarborough 2014; Demarest 2013a). All of these discussions are compromised by a lack of tightly controlled chronological data before 1000 CE; the newer data that we do have highlight the problems in simply using ceramic cross-dating (e.g., Hoggarth et al. 2014).

The goal of this book is to concentrate on the political collapse. After long-held debates on the "collapse of civilizations, cultures, or societies," it is generally admitted that only political regimes really collapse, while societies disintegrate and cities decrease until their final desertion. Most Classic period Maya archaeological sites were deserted cities, but not all their political systems had collapsed. What occurred during the late eighth and early ninth centuries was the political collapse of Classic Maya kings, and possibly of kingship as well. An increasing amount of evidence is now available on detailed aspects of this process, allowing us to raise and answer many questions about the timing, the spread, and the mechanisms of the demise. Who were the protagonists of this drama, and how did they make decisions and act? How much can be discerned as definitive rupture and loss in the rulership systems or regimes? What happened by 800–830 CE in the Maya area? Were there a series of successive wars or revolutions? Did some political components survive? Did the entire lowlands undergo a political transformation during the transition from the Classic to the Postclassic periods? Did the demise of kings mean the end of divine or sacred kingship?

Our Present Understanding

Classic Maya kingship has been defined in three complementary ways following disciplinary approaches. Epigraphers have explored the concept of

the "king as person" in his capacity to embody deities and to be a "ruler of time" (Fields and Reents-Budet 2005; Houston and Stuart 1996; Schele and Miller 1986; Stuart 1996; Wright 2011). Iconographers have studied Maya sacred or divine kings relevant to aspects of their bodies (Baudez 2000; Gillespie 2008), their relation to the sun or maize deities (Baudez 1985; Salazar 2015; Tokovinine 2013), and their symbolic regalia (Principal Bird Deity headdress, K'awiil scepter, serpent bar; Rice 2012; Sharer and Traxler 2006:737–740; Stone and Zender 2011; Taube et al. 2010). Archaeologist Patricia McAnany (1995) has shown how the kings pertained to the places and social groups in which they revered their ancestors. Those three disciplinary approaches consistently define the Classic Maya king as a human being profoundly different from other society members due to his special relation to the gods, supernatural entities, and ancestors.

Archaeologists have studied the monumental architecture and the placement of certain kinds of structures in Classic period centers in order to gain an understanding of the practices of royal governance (e.g., Barrientos 2014; Inomata 2006; Inomata and Houston, eds. 2001; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018; Tsukamoto and Inomata 2014). In a more regional and geopolitical perspective, epigraphers Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube (1995, 2000, 2008) have reconstructed a hierarchy of kingdoms under the "hegemony" of one or more rival capitals in the southern lowlands; these politics engaged the cities of Tikal, Calakmul, Dzibanche, and Caracol during most of the Classic period (Figure 1.1).

No single unitary kingdom ever existed in this area. Regional states may have existed (A. Chase and D. Chase 1998a, 2021; Chase et al. 2009), but much of this region was probably composed of city-states (sensu Grube 2000b) loosely integrated into the southern lowland geopolitical system (sensu Tokovinine 2013). In brief, any deep interrogation on the end of the Classic Maya kingship must address the pragmatics and geopolitical reconstructions of the lowland kingdoms as much as the definition of the divine-sacred king. Does the demise of Classic royal dynasties represent the collapse of sacred or divine kingship? Did the disintegration of the southern geopolitical system also deeply impact or transform the northern lowlands?

This volume takes the stance that the sacred or divine qualities of the king were part of governance pragmatics, modifying his agency and relation to elites and commoners. More than despotic or absolute power (rarely present as such in ancient societies), these qualities gave the king an ontological position in the universe not easily amenable to negotiation. Thus, "rupture" may have been the main mechanism of political change available to Maya

Figure 1.1. Map of the Maya area (drawing by Jean-François Cuenot and Sylvie Éliès, ArchAm, CNRS).

societies at the end of the Classic period—a rapid, brutal disjunction ending forms, effigies, and style, even persons, and operating a "revolution" after which nothing "could ever be the same." We have many signs (archaeological and others) that such breaks did occur in the Maya Lowlands from the end of the eighth century through the first years of the tenth century. The entire hierarchy of kingdoms was deeply affected, but with different rhythms over space and through the times of repeated ruptures during a long crisis. Through conscious and also unconscious intervention of agents—by substitution, reform, repetition, recursivity, and other successive manipulations of traditional systemic elements—overall transformation of the Maya universe may have developed gradually, arising not so much as a system per se but rather as the operation of different temporal rhythms in agency, both regionally and locally. "Rupture" introduces rapid discontinuity; "transformation" gradually reconfigurates extant elements into a system in which continuity may not be easy to detect.

Analytical scrutiny of the Maya collapse frequently leads to an emphasis on regional–local variability in conditions and trajectories. But variation must also be considered in the temporal dimension. We propose that a political collapse can be singled out from other processes that developed later within different causality systems. By the ninth century CE, political rupture and transformation in many cities opened the way to variability in existing regimes (and governance) of Maya urban communities—at least for the ones that survived into the following century. The urban collapse had its own distinct rhythms and timing. Too frequently subsumed in the moment of dynastic failure, chronologies of urban desertion instead had their own logic. A third stage of demographic collapse plausibly followed with a slower, more gradual rhythm that was not necessarily articulated with political and urban dynamics—the result being almost total abandonment of the southern lowlands between 1000 and 1100 CE. Droughts and other environmental degradation certainly would have affected the earlier urban collapse, but the long, eleventh-century series of deep droughts (e.g., Kennett et al. 2012) would had have completed the demographic collapse.

The present collective contribution seeks to answer academic curiosity over the paradox between political collapse, a large part of which took place during the 760–810 CE interval, and the overwhelming literature on nonpolitical causalities that focus on environmental degradation and climate change (a paradox also raised by Aimers and Iannone 2014 and by Chase and Scarborough 2014). As a result, Charlotte Arnauld and Philippe Nondédéo

organized an initial symposium at the Décimo Congreso Internacional de Mayistas at Izamal, June 26–July 2, 2016, in which 15 scholars took part. Although too short, the half-day session highlighted the need to explore the political agency of Maya kings and subroyal elites in the context of several sequential historical crises. With most of the same participants and a few more who could not attend the Izamal session, Tsubasa Okoshi, Charlotte Arnauld, and Philippe Nondédéo organized the international symposium "Rupture or Transformation of Maya Kingship? From Classic to Postclassic Times," held November 11–14, 2017, at the Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Kyoto, Japan. The chapters in this volume derive from the second meeting. Our approach in this book is multidisciplinary; it encompasses archaeology, epigraphy, iconography, and ethnohistory. At the Kyoto symposium, Japanese, American, and European Mayanists assembled representing eight nations (now 10 in the present volume). As members of their own historical societies, participants had divergent collective experiences of past politics, including two long-term, still living traditions of royalty—the Japanese and the European ones. Classic (and Postclassic) Maya kingship can be viewed as part of the Belizean, Guatemalan, and Mexican national and historical traditions. These varied perspectives result in a unique effort to understand the past, even though complete adherence to shared concepts could not be warranted—a point we address later in this introduction.

Unfolding the chains of processes and events that developed through the ninth and tenth centuries in the southern and, then, the northern lowlands is an ambitious historical focus that is necessary if we are to understand one of the most radical political shifts that ever occurred in America. In fact, as recently documented by David Graeber and Marshall Sahlins (2017a), this might be only one among the many trajectories that premodern kingship regimes universally underwent. This volume continues the trend of instilling history into the anthropological model of sacred or divine kingship through exploring the political agency of kings and subroyal elites in the context of several sequential, Late Classic to Postclassic crises. This book focuses on the internal processes of political changes: the way successive generations of actors, kings, courtiers, and commoners performed and acted in the broader context of the Maya Terminal Classic and the Mesoamerican Epiclassic periods.

Beginning with the chapter by Chloé Andrieu, the first part of the volume focuses on the theories of sacred–divine kingship that may well be at the heart of our reflection about rupture. The second and third parts of the book assemble studies of Maya kingdoms situated in the central-southern lowland

tradition, whereas the fourth part deals with the northern lowlands. Five chapters then explore the potential of warfare for rupture and transformation in Classic kingship, and six chapters analyze disjunctions and changes in noble–dynastic relationships as well as political economies. Four other chapters develop the northern trajectory that strongly contrasts with that of the south. The volume ends with two final chapters that both summarize and offer a general discussion of the events in the transition from the Classic to Postclassic eras.

To provide a firmer background to this broad consideration of political process, the remainder of this introductory chapter recapitulates: first, some explanations of the collapse in which Classic Maya kingship had a prominent part; second, general theories of sacred–divine kingship and Maya political organization (related to sovereignty, space, warfare and economy); third, the words for "king" used in the four languages spoken at the Kyoto conference; and, finally, the data, methods, and proxies that can be applied to the study of Maya political ruptures and transformations.

The Maya Collapse and Kingship

Political crises and dynastic changes occurred frequently in many regions of the Maya Lowlands during their two thousand years of social and urban evolution (500 BCE–1500 CE). Even in some later Postclassic polities, strong rulers with paraphernalia and ideology derived from the canonical Classic era occasionally existed. But never before, nor after, had the disjunction been so deep, so rapid in some of its aspects, and so generalized in terms of space. The collapse process began early—at least by 760 CE in the western lowlands (i.e., around the Usumacinta River to the west of Tikal and Caracol and southwest of Calakmul), but it expanded in a swirling pattern from west to east and south to north (Ebert et al. 2014). In the political epicenter of the lowlands, Tikal and Caracol rulers resisted until the extreme end of the ninth century, whereas peripheries had been swept aside by a most rapid phenomenon of dynastic demise. By 860–920 CE new capitals had emerged in the north, specifically at Uxmal and Chichen Itza. New political regimes then took shape, definitely inaugurating the Postclassic period (Cobos 2016; Volta and Braswell 2014). The advent of the Early Postclassic era is not fully understood (see A. Chase and D. Chase 2008; D. Chase and A. Chase 2004a, 2006) and has been referred to as a "dark age" in the past (Proskouriakoff 1955; see also Andrews et al. 2003). However, Late Postclassic Maya Lowland

and Highland societies were thriving anew across an immense area when the Spaniards arrived on the Yucatan coast early in the sixteenth century.

Even though Classic kingship has not always been at the heart of hypotheses built to discern the causes of the ninth-century collapse, a number of researchers have raised important insights that are directly linked to specific features of this political regime. Initially the dated monuments of Maya rulers were used to model the collapse (Lowe 1982), but other relevant approaches were also suggested. Robert Sharer (1977) drew on the deep ritualism engrained in Maya kingship to propose that a late Late Classic "revitalization" movement would have strained people and resources until reaching a critical threshold. George Cowgill (1964b) proposed that warfare impacted Maya rulers and their followers and that large migrations might have played a role in ending the Classic polities. Dennis Puleston (1979) developed an idea, originally advanced by Sylvanus Morley, that the Late Classic stone monument focus on *katun* endings (a calendric period of 20 years) in the Classic lowlands was combined with a fatalistic view of prophecies that foretold the time of the collapse in accord with the use of the Postclassic Katun Round (of 13 *katun*s) found in the Books of Chilam Balam (Edmonson 1982; Roys 1933, 1954). More recently, once the early evidence of Terminal Classic droughts had been published (Hodell et al. 1995), the capacity of the Classic kings to "rain" (an Africanist pun) has been at the center of collapse models (Lucero 2002, 2006; Lucero and Fash 2006; Scarborough 1998; Scarborough et al. 2012).

Those early ideas have never been fully disproved, and they still deserve consideration. However, there are some chinks in the armor. We now know that the various Maya polities used different strategies for water control at different sites and that some Maya kings would not have controlled the "rain" (e.g., A.S.Z. Chase 2016; Chase and Cesaretti 2019). The importance of warfare and population movements in the collapse of the western lowlands has largely been demonstrated by Demarest and his colleagues (Demarest 1997; Demarest et al., eds. 2004). Although applying different assumptions and methods, several scholars have also resumed work on the temporal and spatial distribution of dated monument erections across the lowlands to investigate the collapse (see Ebert et al. 2014:338–341). Without following the Puleston line of thought, Stephen Houston and David Stuart (1996) have developed various aspects of what they call the Maya "rulers of time" and have amply showed the importance of calendrical science in Classic political practices (Stuart 2011a; see also A. Chase 1991 and Rice 2004).

Sacred or Divine Kingship

Undoubtedly, the intricate articulation of sacred or divine power (i.e., the unique relation of the ruler to deities and nonhuman entities) and political ritualism with particular concepts of time gave shape to a rich field of investigation centered on Maya rulers. More recently, the archaeology of material culture, as contextualized in ritual vestiges like some peri-abandonment deposits (e.g., Aimers et al. 2020, but see A. Chase and D. Chase 2020a), has raised new perspectives on one particular aspect of the Classic kingship—specifically, violence and its meanings—that was explored in a volume edited by Gyles Iannone, Brett Houk, and Sonja Schwake (2016a). Their volume examines the scapegoat theory of divine or sacred kingship in terms of the demise of Classic Maya regimes. This theory essentially holds that kingship was responsible for any divine risk, like rain. While it may explain certain aspects of the Maya archaeological record during the 760–830 CE moment, it can neither be applied to all polity trajectories nor elucidate how political rupture and transformation were connected to wider historical and socioeconomic changes in the Maya world. However, following the line of inquiry in this important contribution, our volume represents the first collective effort to effectively concentrate the collapse research on the Maya kingship dynamics in structures, institutions, and agency that spanned the Late Classic and Postclassic periods.

The question of a change in, or loss of, sacrality or a relationship with gods is only one among many questions that can be asked and examined in detail with archaeological evidence pertaining to the ninth-century dynastic demise. Our multidisciplinary approaches do not give the issue particular salience (but see Chapter 16, by D. Chase and A. Chase, in this volume), even though the rapidity and broad spatial spread of the demise must certainly be correlated to those particular qualities (Iannone et al. 2016a). Maya kingdoms were also engaged in "regional hierarchically ordered fields of interacting societies" (Sahlins 2017a:162) and in long-term local trajectories. The chapters of this volume are thus more concerned with issues of interactive and historical developments specific to Maya Lowland societies at the turn of the ninth century during the termination of what has been called their "Classic splendor." More than cosmic position and ontological essence per se, we are interested in the way those qualities modified the capacity for action by the Maya king and how the ruler eventually profited from them (see Brisch 2008a; Gillespie 2008). The idea that sacred or divine kings disappeared from the Maya area at the end of the Classic period stands in contrast

to Postclassic Aztec kings, who enhanced those qualities to their advantage (Dehouve 2017; Gillespie 1989; Graulich 1998). Such a contrast may deserve historical, more than evolutionary, scrutiny (see Graeber 2017:416–417).

The relationships of Classic Maya Rulership with "Political Organization" have raised some degree of controversy. In Mesoamerican archaeology the "kingship" concept has situated the thinking and guided research away from the "band-tribe-chiefdom-state" evolutionary framework. Caricaturing, we might say that kingship undermines the sequence since as an institution it does not apply to societies that were bands or tribes; it frequently works at a chiefdom level and, minimally, paves the way for a future state (the autonomous Leviathan machine or super-king). This is a most superficial perspective on the topic, one with strictly typological concerns.

More fruitful is the dichotomy that envisions supposedly static political regimes embedded in social kinship, on the one hand, and dynamic regimes adapting and reacting to historical processes, on the other hand. This dichotomy has grounded several processual and postprocessual archaeological controversies in Maya research on politics (Iannone 2002; see also Hansen and Stepputat 2006:297–299). In her book *Living with the Ancestors: Kinship and Kingship in Ancient Maya Society,* McAnany (1995) articulates a clear anthropological model creating a dual perspective that combines both ends (Iannone 2002:74). Thus, a focus on ancestrality may have been among the elements that Maya kingship lost by the end of the Classic period (see Chapter 16, by D. Chase and A. Chase, and Chapter 15, by Ringle et al., in this volume).

Two not so different dual perspectives also emerged in 1996: first, the exclusionary versus corporate framework, as articulated by Richard Blanton and his colleagues (1996); and, second, the segmentary versus centralized framework, as debated by John Fox, Garrett Cook, Arlen Chase, and Diane Chase (1996) in a *Current Anthropology* forum entitled "The Maya State: Centralized or Segmentary?" A supplementary comment by Arthur Demarest advocated a temporal "cycling" of both trends, following an earlier exposition by Joyce Marcus (1992a). If indeed viewed as entailing complementary rather than exclusive poles, both dual perspectives provided pertinent theoretical frameworks for research focusing on the dynamics of kingdoms (see Iannone 2002). Both helped envision realistically how distinct elitist sectors had divergent interests and developed different strategies internally and externally. By the time these two frameworks had emerged, two earlier cross-cultural works had explored relevant complex topics related to factional

competition and the role of ancient Mesoamerican elites (Brumfiel and Fox 1994; D. Chase and A. Chase 1992).

However, royal sovereignty, power, its legitimation, and its dissolution raise issues that differ from the sociology of political regime formation and reproduction. Even earlier, *Society against the State* by Pierre Clastres (1977 [1974]) had provided ethnographic evidence from South America documenting how societies largely organized by kinship can develop elaborate political agency structured by the very resistance of people against the power of one human person appropriating divine authority. Graeber and Sahlins (2017a) have expanded on this line of thought, developing two models of political struggle (or resistance), one opposing local social groupings or "owners of the land" to the "stranger king" and the other model involving subjects who sacralize the king to protect themselves from his divinity. Maurice Godelier (2007) insists on the (now consensual) view that no kinship organization can by itself create and support political structures; only religion with ritualized practices engaging human and nonhuman entities can weave the threads of creative and reproductive institutions for societies, one of them being kingship, "a distinct and centralizing institution, reproduced through public ritual, constituting a symbolic center of society" (Hansen and Stepputat 2006:298). This formulation is in line with the much earlier, yet still influential works of Arthur Hocart (1936), and of later anthropologists like Stanley Tambiah (1976, 1977) and Clifford Geertz (1980) working on Southeast Asia kingdoms and their galactic conception of space where the ruler's authority is a function of his or her physical presence (see Demarest 1992; see also Andrieu [Chapter 2] and Ringle et al. [Chapter 14] in this volume).

Anthropological and theoretical formulations on political space have guided archaeological research on Maya polities and have helped envision them as hierarchized societies more than controlled territories ("[the king] rules the people, the clans rule the land," Sahlins 2017a:193, citing Beattie 1971; see also Chase et al. 2009). Maya epigraphers are currently refining the Classic nonterritorial politics with new definitions of geopolitics (e.g., Beliaev 2000; Helmke et al. 2015; Stuart and Houston 1994; Tokovinine 2013), and this line of research must be kept in mind when studying the role of warfare during the collapse. Decipherment of royal titles, including the famous emblem glyphs (Berlin 1958), continues to provide further insights on the spatiality of Classic royal authority (e.g., Helmke 2012) and, against all prescribed autochthonous ancestrality, on the propensity of royal dynasties to relocate their seats of power (e.g., Gronemeyer 2012; and Martin and Velasquez García 2016; see also Okoshi 2012a about authority and territory).

It remains to be seen whether the marked religious and ritual conception of kingship, its emergence and shaping, redefines warfare through theories of sacrifice (Bloch 1992; Iannone et al. 2016a; Sahlins 1985; Scubla 2002) and reformulates "political economy" through the dichotomy of local land production against exotic luxury imports (Feinman 2001; Hansen and Stepputat 2006; Helms 1993; Sahlins 2017a:193–197). Warfare and material resource control would thereby not be given the autonomy they have as specific fields of practice in Western modern polities. Yet Maya researchers acknowledge that kingly authority must be understood in its materialist dimensions (control of war and labor forces) while conceiving of these as enacted and materialized by structurally religious relations, from monumental construction to human sacrifice to tribute and slavery (McAnany 2010; Ringle 1999). Earlier debates on royal "propaganda" in Maya stone inscriptions (e.g., following Marcus 1992b) have little relevance in this framework—but the notion is not to be dismissed too lightly, especially considering the troubled times of rapidly dissolving geopolitics. Relevant to the collapse issue—and probably a good illustration of the complex linkages between warfare, economics, and religion—is a consideration of the diplomatic, trade, and military relationships of Maya polities with those of the Central Mexican Highlands extending from the Early Classic domination of Mesoamerica by the Teotihuacan state to the Epiclassic Mesoamericanization process witnessed at Chichen Itza (Schwartz and Nichols 2006; see also Arnauld [Chapter 8], Ringle et al. [Chapter 14], and Nondédéo et al. [Chapter 6] in this volume).

Kings and Rulers

The words we use in the four languages spoken by the participants to the Kyoto international symposium deserve some attention, especially as they convey the cultural nuances of considering kingship.

The word corresponding to "king" in Japanese is "Ou"; this refers not only to the governmental action as the ruler or sovereign but also to the moral-ethical principles embodied in him (Shogakukan's Editorial Committee of the Great Japanese Dictionary 2006:2:834; see Okoshi, Chapter 17, in this volume). Historically, from the second half of the fifth century, the highest ruler began to be called Ookimi (Great Ruler), and later Tenshi (emperor, literally "Son of Heaven"), which was replaced soon by Tennô (emperor, literally "Heavenly Sovereign"), although the former denomination (Tenshi) continued to be used until the nineteenth century. In the Japanese context, Ten, or heaven, also means the highest and omnipotential ruler of all

creation and Tennô, Tenshi are considered as the sovereign who rules by the order and in the name of Ten (heaven) (Shogakukan's Editorial Committee of the Great Japanese Dictionary 2006:9:745, 789, 845). Tennô is considered a transmitter of the divine voices as it is indicated in his honorific expression Sumera-mikoto (Shogakukan's Editorial Committee of the Great Japanese Dictionary 2006:7:1070).

From the twelfth century, due to the establishment of the Shogunate, the emperor's rulership was delegated to the Shogun who administrated *daimyos* (feudal lords) through his Bakufu (governmental office). Therefore, the Japanese rulership was divided into two mutually dependent sectors. The Shogun represents the secular rulership whose authority depends partially on the Tennô. This means that the Tennô always had played a ritual role to sustain the moral-ethical and spiritual framework for all the available institutions and the people of Japan, and the Shogun and his Bakufu were responsible for materializing it. In this regard, both the Tennô and the Shogun acted in a sense as a corporate being, and for this reason Japanese scholars make no distinction between the two aspects of the kingship, "sacred" and "divine," but also consider them as the same (Takeshi Inomata, personal communication 2017).

The French word of common use is *roi,* avoiding the feudal-connoted *seigneur,* and the modern *gouvernants* or *gouverneurs,* which refer to effective governmental action. *Roi* (as the Spanish *rey*) originates from the Indo-European *rex* (Latin) and *raj-(an)* (Sanskrit), both terms referring to religious priests more than sovereigns (Benveniste 1969:9–15). *Royauté* is preferred to *monarchie,* as we do not know whether all Classic (or Postclassic) kingdoms had only one king ruling. English-speaking Maya researchers, while not discarding the words "king" and "queen"—which are perhaps mostly used by epigraphers (e.g., Houston and Stuart 1996; Martin and Grube 2000; Stuart 1996)—tend rather to stress concepts pertaining to governing, legitimacy, and agency with the term "ruler"; many times these researchers use the plural "rulers," thus leaving open the issues of the number of persons involved in ruling and of their distinct status as "royal," "subroyal" or "noble" (a "ruler" as a straight line may have a similar semantic field as *rectus* in Latin, Benveniste 1969:11). Some researchers have even proposed that there was no single ruler but rather a secular and a sacred ruler (see Becker 1983; and Rice 2004). Whatever the case, "rulership" is definitely preferred to "kingship"; "royalty" is generally used to connote status with "lords" and "princes" sometimes being used to convey a sense of an encompassing hierarchical order more or less detached from effective functions of governing (although

Maya titles like *sajal* and *lakam* are also used to connote lesser status nobles and functionaries). Reference is also made to an "overlord" (or emperor) to designate a higher-status king (e.g. Houston 2008a, 2012), again using epigraphic referents. The Spanish-speaking Mayistas almost carefully avoid the word "*rey,*" to which they prefer *gobernante,* possibly to avoid colonial-time connotations. Most Spanish scholars rather opt for the Maya titles, *kalo'mte*' for "emperor," *ajaw* for "ruler," or *k'uhul ajaw* for "divine ruler," and *yajaw* for "overlord" (e.g., Lacadena García-Gallo and Ciudad Ruiz 1998). This could be a more convenient option.

This simple lexical revision points to several interesting semantic overlaps between the existence and the action of the king; his reigning and his governing both unilaterally and plurally; ontological distance and functional multiplicity; and superiority and hierarchy, among others. All of these fields are useful for investigation, especially as comparative work starts where we researchers speak (utter words) and share notions.

Data and Their Frameworks, Methods, and Proxies

Evidence bearing on the agency of Late Terminal Classic Maya kings and nobles has been accumulating relatively recently (post 2005) due to a renewed emphasis on Mesoamerican rituals, warfare, and trade, along with more detailed epigraphic decipherments (e.g., Helmke, Hoggarth et al. 2017, Chapter 7, this volume) based on better archaeological data. This is why this book is one of the very few works to adopt such a definite historical perspective focusing on what actions and strategies destroyed, yet also transformed, Maya Lowland polities and institutions (but see Foias 2013). We build not only on the essential data synthesis produced by Arthur Demarest, Prudence Rice, and Don Rice (2004) in their edited volume on the Terminal Classic as a critical period, but also on Glenn Schwartz and John Nichols's (2006) cross-cultural collective work dedicated to postcollapse "regeneration" of complex societies. Lisa Lucero's (2006) research on the role of the Maya king as a ritual and effective purveyor of water and Gyles Iannone's (2014) collective contribution on *The Great Maya Droughts* also provided us with critical data series and interpretations. Also, as previously mentioned, Iannone et al.'s (2016a) *Ritual Violence and the Fall of the Classic Maya Kings* concentrates on late archaeological signals of violence. The "stranger king"—not a new concept in Mesoamerica (A. Chase and D. Chase 2020a; Gillespie 1989; Sahlins 1985; see Ringle et al. this volume)—received a broader treatment in Graeber and Sahlins's (2017a) *On Kings,* published a month after the Kyoto

symposium. From this book, the amply documented historical scenarios labeled "galactic mimesis" and "serial stranger kingship structure" may help account for both sudden ruptures and gradual changes in the sequence of late Maya political scenarios.

In ancient Mesoamerica, particularly in the Maya area, the use of a historical approach has long been subsumed under a "conjunctive approach" (see Maca 2010 for an assessment) that combined first archaeology with ethnohistory and ethnography (e.g., Hammond and Willey 1979) and then also added the Maya script to the mix once it was sufficiently deciphered (e.g., Houston and Martin 2016). Simultaneous advances in script and linguistic knowledge of the various Maya literate productions and in archaeological understanding of material culture have led researchers to examine the ways ancient Maya people perceived circumstances, acted in contexts, and memorialized events. The agency theoretical framework stimulated many studies of rituals and ritualized action, giving unity to otherwise separate research efforts developed in ideology, political organization, economy, and subsistence activities (e.g. D. Chase and A. Chase 2004a; Flannery 1999; Inomata 2006; Lucero 2006; McAnany 2010).

One methodological advance that we can rely on is the chronological sequence of three distinct moments of collapse, each possibly with different causal systems: the rapid kingship collapse, then the more gradual "urban crumble," followed by a transformation related to demographic failure or depression (Culbert 1988) extending well into the Early Postclassic period, possibly until 1250 CE. The advances that chronological refinements can bring to this sequence are illustrated in one specific example: the history of the complex demise of the Ceibal kings (Bazy and Inomata 2017; see also Demarest et al. [Chapter 18] and Inomata [Chapter 4] in this volume). At least in the second moment, and most certainly in the third one, droughts of variable intensity and length no doubt impacted Maya societies and rulership but cannot be the ultimate reason for the collapse (e.g., Haldon et al. 2018; Turner and Sabloff 2012). But the sequence in itself resulted in highly variable impact types, justifying that each moment be investigated by itself and also in relation with the others.

In a recent archaeological essay on sovereignty, Adam Smith (2011:419) elicits specific practices of polity reproduction, like performances or "spectacles in co-presence of kings and subjects," with the material mediation of "political landscapes" and objects (e.g., see Campbell 2009). The Classic Maya royal trinity of monumental courtly architecture, stone carved inscriptions, and Long Count calendrical concepts of historical recording amply

materialize and illustrate performances, as well as landscapes and objects, producing detailed evidence on the historical contexts, decision-making, and strategies of Classic kings, their contemporaneous leaders, or the newly installed councils (see chapters by A. Chase and D. Chase [13], Demarest et al. [18], Grube [3], Nondédéo et al. [6], and Ringle et al. [14]). How those architectural and intellectual achievements were discontinued, resumed, or modified (e.g., masonry to wooden architecture, or images carved on stone to images carved in wood or modeled on ceramic vessels) is of utmost interest to specify changes in institutions, economic practices, trade routes, and geopolitics (see chapters by Demarest et al. [18], Helmke et al. [7], and Źrałka et al. [12] in this volume). In the long Maya collapse sequence, economic practices must be explored in relation not only to political agency but also to changing urban conditions (e.g., Hutson 2016, 2017), including mobility and migration patterns.

As discussed at the Kyoto symposium, "peri-abandonment rituals" (sensu Helmke et al., Chapter 7, this volume; also called "above-floors deposits" [Freidel 2016:275–280] or seen as the products of "rapid abandonment" [A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a]) do not reach (yet) the status of well-defined proxies to political change, in spite of recent advances in interpretation of the enormous number of such deposits excavated in the Maya area (e.g., Aimers et al. 2020; A. Chase and D. Chase 2020a). The issue remains whether these material vestiges are directly related to ritual and violence or whether they are simply the result of rapid abandonment in the face of warfare. No matter the case, still to be answered is by whom and against whom? This is possibly one of the most intricate questions lying at the heart of the concept of sacred kingship and its link to sacrifice (e.g., Bloch 1992; Scubla 2002), but otherwise it also simply asks what were the types of ritualism used by Maya people when revolting, when abandoning their masonry dwellings, and when reverting from sedentism to mobility (Inomata 2004). Those immensely variable deposits in content and wealth also represent good, although ambiguous, proxies to economic prosperity, long-distance exchanges, and levels of subsistence (see the chapters by Helmke et al. [7] and Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguin [11]).

Diachronic studies on developmental issues like ours do not easily accommodate cross-cultural comparative research (but see Schwartz and Nichols 2006). Synchronic analyses of individual societies more directly incorporate wide-scale comparisons bearing on some specificities of their kingships (e.g., Foias 2013; Gillespie 2008; Iannone 2016; Inomata 2001; Miller and Martin 2004). Yet Nicole Brisch (2008a) succeeds in assembling comparative

chapters on diverse ancient societies in which kings "became divine" at some moment, and her section devoted to "divine kingship and empire" compares interesting models of "punctuated" or "ephemerous" divine kingships consciously proclaimed in what seems to be imperialistic rather than shamanistic or animist contexts (see Brisch 2008b).

Final Comment

Sacred or divine kingship was described by James Frazer (1922) and Hocart (1936) well before the development of neo-evolutionist anthropology and archaeology. Mayanists were probably not the sole archaeologists who relegated this "type" of political regime to being an archaism of limited interest. However, we should be aware, on the one hand, of the strong but somewhat indirect influence of Hocart's work on Maya studies and, on the other hand, of the renewed interest political theory gives to certain aspects of power relations, sovereignty, or concepts relative to leaders in countries that have been colonized but that still retain components of their precolonial political regime (Feeley-Harnik 1985; Hansen and Stepputat 2005). It is well known that, in the New World, colonialism disintegrated and ended the indigenous ancient regimes, yet the degree to which traces of ancient kingships survived is still an important issue (Wolf 1982, 1998).

Acknowledgments

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I

THEORIES

2

K'uhul Ajaw and Sacred Kings

Historicity and Change in Sacred Royalty / Divine Kingship Societies

CHLOÉ ANDRIEU

Divine or sacred kingship has been an anthropological obsession for decades. When we call a society a divine kingship, we implicitly refer to more than a century of anthropological discussions, debates, and adjacent theories such as ritual regicide, the stranger-king, binary societies, or galactic polities, all of which have been part of the major debates in anthropological literature. This term has therefore acquired a plurality of meanings and implications as broad as the history behind it.

Within the Maya area, the same term is employed to designate the Classic political institution, for the good reason that the king was referred to as "*k'uhul ajaw,*" or sacred king. Tatiana Proskouriakoff's liminal work first showed the godly aspects of the Maya kings on stele representations (Proskouriakoff 1950). J. Eric Thompson later developed an explicit demonstration of how the Maya royalties could fit into the divine kingship category on iconographic and archaeological bases (Thompson 1973); later on, the deciphering of the *k'uhul ajaw* glyphs confirmed that the very name for the rulers was that of a "sacred" ruler (Freidel 2016; Houston and Stuart 1996; Mathews 1985; Schele and Miller 1986). Today Mayanists often refer to the Classic political system either as a "sacred royalty" or a "divine kingship" (Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018; Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume) or as the *k'uhul ajaw* system (Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume; Demarest et al. 2016).

Despite this, divine kingship theories have not been developed as much in the Maya area as they have in African or South East Asian studies (de Heusch 1981, 1997, 2005; Frazer 1922; Geertz 1980; Graeber 2011; Scubla 2002;

Tambiah 1977). Furthermore, unlike in the Mexican region (Dehouve 2017; Gillespie 1989; Sahlins 2017b), neither the scapegoat debate (although see Iannone et al. 2016a) nor the stranger-king theories (although see Bricker 1993, or more recently, Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018; A. Chase and D. Chase 2020b; and Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume) or the duality of societies were ever central to Maya political study. However, some specific divine kingship-related theories did have a considerable impact on Maya studies, such as the prestige goods theory (Helms 1993; Joyce 1991) and, even more so, the galactic polity theory (Demarest 1992; Tambiah 1977), with the latter still being very much an issue in discussions about Maya political organization.

In fact, divine or sacred kingship has come to mean a type of governance of society that could be defined as the imbrication of ritual into politics, with a growing number of authors actually using the determiner "a," as in "a divine kingship," when referring to a society in which there is an interdependence of the notions of ritual and political power, and its legitimation (Iannone 2016). It would seem that, despite its broad and diverse use around the world and in different periods, the same question about the nature of religious ideology and its extension into the realm of political authority always arises when referring to such societies. In the Maya area, that remains one of the central questions in discussions about the Classic political or economic system and its transformations (Baudez 2000; A. Chase and D. Chase 1998a; Demarest 2013b; Fields and Reents-Budet 2005; Inomata 2001, 2006, 2016a; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018).

Since literature on divine kingship is comparatist per se, this chapter suggests a rapid and necessarily incomplete review of the various trends in studies dealing with the subject in order to determine how these debates, and specifically the question of historicity and change in such societies, have been handled over time. Could they have influenced our own concerns about the transformation of Maya sacred kingship systems, and could they potentially shed light on future studies on this topic?

All Power Is Ritual

Since James Frazer's early definition, the term "divine kingships" has always been associated with a discussion about the ritual nature of power. In his famous *The Golden Bough* (Frazer 1922), he posits the magical origins of kingship, his idea being that the concept of kingship was embedded in a conception of the world that both included the cosmos and the king. For Frazer, the divine king wields power over nature, and this power is directly

correlated to his personal strength. Therefore, if the king's health declines, he has to die in order maintain the order of the world. The book was extremely influential when it was published; since then, the idea that ritual could be considered a factor in social unification has been central to numerous works in a range of disciplines.

> From 1898, Durkheim . . . was taking it as demonstrated that "the elementary forms of the religious life" were also the elementary forms of social life, and that cultural phenomena (law, art, science, etc.), all had religious roots. Only economic activity, he maintained, had not yet been expressly linked to religion. Only a little later, Mauss [2007](1924) established that economic exchanges should be interpreted in the light of ceremonial exchange; Laum (1924) that money had a sacrificial origin. (Scubla 2002:361)

Pursuing the same idea some 20 years later, Arthur Hocart (1927) aimed to create a general theory of such highly social relations being generated by ritual. For Hocart, the purpose of ritual is to create life, and food, health, and fertility derived from, and were increased by, ritual. In Hocart's view, ritual is therefore closely associated with political power. He clearly states the ritual origin of society: social and political institutions, war, and the division of labor would all have been the result of ritual functions that then would have "specialized" over time. Ritual would be both the source of social relations and the institutional means to consolidate them. This clearly influenced both Georges Dumézil's work on the symbolism of kingship among the Indo-Europeans, with the same idea of ritual—or in this case, mythology—structuring the entire society (Dumézil 1940), and Mircea Eliade's work, with the idea that the "sacred" orientation provides the impulse for the "profane" activities of "traditional man" (Eliade 1965). In all cases, the common denominator of those theories lies in the concept that ritual, power, and political institutions are entangled and that myths or ritual have a structuring role on the rest of society.

Taking up the idea of ritual as a source of power, Marshall Sahlins built a further model, suggesting that in order to rule, sacred kings had to be outside of society (Sahlins 1981, 1985, 2017c). According to him, the majority of kings claimed to come from some place other than the places they governed. "Underlying it all, the reach for both celestial and terrestrial powers beyond the cosmocrater's own, is the alterity of the sources of human life and death, and thereby of the welfare of the social totality" (Sahlins 2017c:367). For Sahlins, the stranger-king is an archetypal form of political organization

that acquired diverse expressions in different societies. In such a system, the distinction between the local and the foreign shaped the entire society, the economy as well as the social organization (Sahlins 2017a:192). The mythical stranger-king account is also one of the historicity of ancient societies, where future and past are analyzed though a mythical narrative. Such societies would "have constituted their historic order on the repetition of legendary events that never happened" (Sahlins 2017a:145).

The Divine Kingship Nebula

As shown by this very quick review, what we call divine kingship theories are actually a nebulous medley of correlated theories, all of which differ considerably, with a myriad of correlated topics that cannot be properly resumed in such a short chapter. I have assembled ideas from these many authors to summarize the common threads in the theoretical debate on sacred royalty as follows.

Many of the discussions focus on the origins of kingship, with a very clear evolutionist perspective as the guiding principle, with the aim of demonstrating that this origin is ritual (Bloch 1992; Dumézil 1940; Hocart 1927, 1936). Considerable literature has been devoted to the royal regicide theory. Since the king was the symbol of the prosperity of his kingdom, he had to be sacrificed, when old and weak, in order to maintain the order of the cosmos (Adler 1982; Quigley 2000; Scubla 2003). The "did they really kill their kings" debate (Graeber 2011:4) raged on for years, with the question of whether or not this sacrifice was symbolic (Evans-Pritchard 1948; Gilbert 2008; Girard 1972; Iannone 2016; Muller 1980; Scubla 2003; Trigger 2003).

Another aspect of the debate is the distinction between "divine kingship" and "sacred kingship" or royalty. Some authors stress the fact that kings as living gods were rare (de Heusch 1997, 2005; Gluckman 1952), while others state the opposite, and others still claim that the distinction is not valid (Claessen 2015).

There is also a very structuralist literature, seeking structures in induction rituals or royal funerals in different societies, for instance (Cannadine and Price 1992; de Heusch 1997; Fortes 1967). More broadly, the stranger-king theories look for the way the "cultural politics of alterity" (Sahlins 2017b, 2017c) structured societies and their interactions with each other through time and space.

Finally, there is a discussion about the distinct functions of the divine king and whether they can be combined in the same figure or distributed across

many (the duality or otherwise of such societies) (Adler 1982; de Heusch 2005; Dehouve 2017; Hocart 1936; Sahlins 1985, 2017b, 2017c).

Nevertheless, these different models are all closely related to each other since they share the equation between life and royal ritual and, from there, the power of the king himself (Rowlands 1999). The remaining question always associated with divine or sacred kingship theories is the concept of entanglement between historical process and cultural order, between social structure and cosmological models, and it is precisely that entanglement that defines those societies whose modalities are at stake.

The Ideal and the Real

For that same reason, despite the diversity of societies and periods to which the concept has been applied, these societies have triggered surprisingly similar debates and criticisms (Feeley-Harnik 1985). The most frequent critics are that all these models tend to suggest the primacy of culture over all other processes, as if these societies were entirely modeled by their own cosmogonies, independent of historical factors. Sacred kingships tend to be considered as a given cultural system that serves as its own explanation without resort to historical factors (Tambiah 2013:507–508). If we consider a system as its own explanation, it is difficult to perceive change. If these polities were not timeless entities but were historically grounded, they could be subject to transformations that these theories of power do not allow us to think (Inomata 2016a; Rowlands 1999; Thomas 1995).

In the same way, the matter of the relationship between ideology and the economy in societies defined as sacred royalties has also been very discussed, with the question of determining which prevailed over the other. Do social and political relations dominate production or the reverse? In particular, in the 1960s and 1970s, Marxist anthropologists debated whether the so-called sacred royalties corresponded to the "Asiatic mode of production" (Godelier 1969; Wittfogel 1957), in which ideology was used a means of legitimizing the mobilization of resources. These debates clearly show what is at stake when discussing divine kingship systems: the question of the separation of ideas from material practice, the relation between social structure and cosmological models, and "the practical realities of production, trade and consumption into the ideological sphere" (Rowlands 1999:168). This is precisely one of the major issues in Classic Maya political studies.

K'uhul Ajaw and Divine Kingship

There has been a consensus for considering Maya Classic royalties as sacred kingships (more than divine) since epigraphic, iconographic, and archaeological data all converge to show that Maya rulers presented themselves as protectors of the order of the cosmos and the rulers of time (Schele and Freidel 1990; Schele and Miller 1986; Stuart 1996, 2005a). Iconographic and epigraphic data also show that the *k'uhul ajaw* sometimes impersonated divinities during religious performances and that kingly rituals were enacted for the promotion of life, probably through the letting of blood (Houston et al. 2006; Houston and Stuart 1996; Stuart 1984). Therefore, the importance of ritual in the legitimacy of royal power is very broadly accepted for the Classic period (see, e.g., Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume; Demarest 2013b; Freidel 2016; Houston and Stuart 1996; Inomata and Tsukamoto 2014; Marcus 1983; McAnany 2001; Schele and Mathews 1998; Schele and Miller 1986; Stuart 1996; Thompson 1973).

The notion of sacred royalty itself is now an accepted paradigm when referring to the Classic Maya political system. Furthermore, certain "sacred royalty-related models" such as the stranger-king did influence the Mayanist research tradition; more broadly, the correlation between the notion of the far away, the unknown, and the sacrality of power (Helms 1993) have proven to be highly relevant to the understanding certain patterns of Maya political life (A. Chase and D. Chase 2020b; Demarest 2013b; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018; Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume). However, these have been used in such a way as to have been emptied of most of their structuralist content, and were never employed as a general interpretative model for understanding the structure of society and its political organization, as implied in the original model (Sahlins 2017a; 2017b).

The theater state, or galactic polity, model, which derived from Southeast Asian models (Demarest 1992; Geertz 1980; Sahlins 2017b; 2017c; Tambiah 1977), is probably the only generally interpretative divine kingship-related frame of reference to have been really employed as a whole in the Maya area (Inomata 2006; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018; Demarest 2013b). This system, whereby the performative role of the divine rulers brings together a number of galactic principalities with changing boundaries and affiliations cemented together more by a commitment to a religious political ideology than by economic domination (Demarest 1992; Inomata 2006; Sahlins 2017a; Tambiah 1977), is still considered useful for describing some aspects of Maya regional political organizations (Demarest et al. 2016). Here again, one of the most

debated aspects regarding this model, or the political economy of the Maya Lowlands in general, is the very question of the entanglement of ritual, the economy, and power. The matter of how this entanglement practically structured the organization of resources has led to very important discussions to determine whether the economy should be disentangled from the ritual and the politics when studying these processes (Demarest 2013b; King 2015; McAnany 2010, 2013a; Wells 2006; Wells and Davis-Salazar 2007) and to what degree such a separation would be artificial (Tambiah 2013; Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2018).

Therefore, as a research tradition, we might say that the divine kingship concept is both deeply anchored and widely accepted as a descriptive category of Classic Maya political institutions and means of power, and that this notion has profoundly influenced the tradition of analysis, the categorization, and the questioning in research on the Maya area.

A Descriptive Term or a Model?

Such a consensus makes it even more noteworthy that the other "divine kingship nebula models" have so rarely been applied or even tested in the Maya area. And when they have, they have tended to be used only in a very implicit way (see Iannone et al. 2016b:2 for a discussion) or only as descriptive categories. Divine/sacred kingship theories have rarely been used explicitly as predictive or explanatory models as they have been in other parts of the world (Graeber and Sahlins 2017a; Quigley 2005; Tambiah 2013); the search for more structuralist questions such as the duality of power or economics (Adler 1982; de Heusch 1997; Sahlins 2017a) has never really stuck in the Mayanist literature. Despite the general acceptance of the sacrality and rituality of power of the Classic kings, the Maya area of research has remained very much at the fringe of this anthropological debate.

Recently, however, certain aspects of these models have been tested in a renewed approach not for understanding the functioning of Classic Maya politics but rather regarding the collapse of the *k'uhul ajaw* system at the end of the Classic period. Gyles Iannone and colleagues (2016b) suggest examining the scapegoat theory as a possible explanatory model for the collapse of the Maya political system, and question whether not just the king but the whole institution of kingship may have been treated as a scapegoat at the end of the Classic period, as a reaction to the general crisis the lowland endured during the ninth century (Iannone 2016:58).

Interestingly, many chapters in this book (Iannone et al. 2016a) reveal the

general tendency toward the relatively unhistorical and homogenist view of power underlying the idea of divine kingship as a general cultural scheme (Freidel 2016:275; Iannone 2016; Iannone et al 2016b:4; Inomata 2016a). Some authors also address the question of directly relating the question of the lack of prosperity with the lack of legitimation, first because there were probably other reasons for challenging power, as well as other sources of power (Guderjan and Hanratty 2016), but also because this suggests a univocal conception of legitimacy (Inomata 2016a:90–91) that is a very functionalist reification of social relationships. In fact, the growing considerations for the complexity of power relations through questions such as those concerning the rise and multiplication of nonroyal elites (Arnauld et al. 2017; Demarest et al. 2016; Iannone 2005; Jackson 2013), the competition and the renegotiation of power relations through time or the tensions between kingship and kinship (Arnauld, Michelet, and Nondédéo 2013; Arnauld, Chapter 8, this volume; McAnany 1995, 2010, 2013a), and the studies of "outliers" in variability" (Demarest 2013b; Demarest et al., Chapter 18, this volume) are all a constant in recent studies of Maya political systems that make certain divine king schemes of interpretation and their underlying conception of power and legitimacy now seem obsolete.

Divine Kingship Today

Recent trends no longer search for vast comparative theories about the evolution of societies. However, the terms "sacred royalty" or "divine kingship" are still used to describe many societies. In fact, when the term is used to describe a specific kind of society as "a sacred royalty," it appears with the determiner "a," as in "a divine kingship" (Claessen 2015; Quigley 2005; Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume; Sahlins 2017a). It is then defined as a society whose kings are sacred/divinized (while still leaving the question of whether they are the one or the other) and where the power of the kings is closely entangled with ritual performance and cosmogonic schemes.

An idea that occurs with great frequency is that the institution of divine kingship is one of the most extreme manifestations of the entanglement of religion and rule (Brisch 2008b; Demarest 2013b; Freidel 2016; Iannone 2016; Quigley 2005). Here once again we see that it is this aspect of divine kingship that defines such societies as a type. That apart, it appears from recent literature on the topic that the concept has been mostly been emptied of the rest of the debate concerning sacrifice, the death of the king, the origin of kingship, or the vitalist analysis of power. At present "divine kingship" seems

to refer only to a specific type of governance in what would be a typology of power structures. However, sacred royalty is still considered an object of study by itself (Claessen 2015; Graeber and Sahlins 2017a; Iannone 2016).

In recent literature on sacred royalty it is possible to identify two major current trends. The first is the most representative of the data I have gathered in the "the rhetoric of power" category and mostly focuses on the question of how the sacrality/divinity of the king is represented (either in iconography, linguistics, etc.) (Bernbeck 2008; Freidel 2008; Houston and Stuart 1996; Winter 2008). The second trend appears as a clear reaction to the lack of historicity problem in the divine kingship debate. Some papers suggest taking into account other manifestations of power in a given society, with the clear concept that power not only belongs to the king or the institution but is renegotiated everywhere and is found in the hands of other actors (Friedman 1982; Kuchler 1997; Puett 2008; Thomas 1995). The idea, even if applied to very different societies and with very different methods, is that most power relationships are multiple and generally contested and that power lies not only in the hands of the kings. This kind of approach makes it possible to add historicity to the question by displacing the view of power and the actors of these power relations (Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 2006).

It does appear that the entanglement of ideology and power lying at the heart of the definition of sacred kingship societies is no longer a focus of research in itself. In order to look for historicity, which was the major problem with previous divine kingship models, there is currently a tendency to divide historical, sociological, religious, and economic processes in order to perceive these societies as historically grounded and determined with their proper evolution. However, at the same time, this also implies a disentanglement of these processes, even though it was precisely that entanglement that was at the core of the definition of this category of society.

On Kings: Subsuming the Opposition between Politics and Cosmology?

David Graeber and Marshall Sahlins's latest book clearly takes up the universalist-comparatist tradition of sacred kingship theories (Graeber and Sahlins 2017a) by extending it to political power in general (Sahlins 2017d). Their idea is that most human political authority is molded on cosmic power, "As a corollary, there are no secular authorities: human power is spiritual power—however pragmatically it is achieved" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017b:3). The authors suggest subsuming the old opposition between the ideal and the real

(Godelier 1977) by introducing the notion of metapersonal power (Sahlins 2017d:40). By integrating interactions with metapersons into the study of political relations and bearing in mind that the distinction between the supernatural and the natural does not exist in most societies (Descola 2005), we are able to overcome the old dialectic concerning the primacy of the ideal over the real or vice versa. This considerably revitalizes the debate and enables us to radically rethink most of the arguments inherent to the divine kingship concepts. There is no longer any reason to oppose humans to spirits, the material to the spiritual, or the world to the otherworld since most societies consider them together (Descola 2005; Graeber and Sahlins 2017b:30; Stuart 2005a).

The historical dynamics of such societies would thus come from what is known as the "adverse sacralization" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017b:8), which consists of concealing the mortal nature of the king and restricting him to an immaterial being confined to his palace and even, sometimes, being killed. The antagonism between the king and popular forces would therefore be one of the keys to understanding the evolution of such organizations.

> When popular forces win, the result can thus take the form of . . . the reduction of the monarch to ceremonial figurehead. . . . When kings definitively win . . . a different range of conflicts ensue, largely, between the living and the dead. (Graeber and Sahlins 2017b: 8–9)

What they call the horizontal and vertical "sinking status" phenomenon is that of centrifugal dispersion of royals, implying a progressive disintegration of power.

> On the one hand, each collateral line that breaks off from the dynastic core descends even lower in status as new ones are constantly produced. . . . On the other hand, the central line itself is usually seen as declining steadily in status, as the current ruler becomes even more distant from the founding hero, god, or stranger-king. (Graeber and Sahlins 2017b:9)

This sinking phenomenon of power is inherent since competition with the divine dead is almost inevitable and increases through time (Graeber and Sahlins 2017b:10). Therefore, they suggest that structural features can be found in any divine kingship (Graeber 2017:460) and reside, among other things, in the tensions between the king and the people, the evolution of which would be "through a veritable circus-world of oddities" (Graeber 2017:381), such "oddities" being precisely what we need to study and understand.

Conclusion

These recent tendencies clearly show the insistence on considering divine kingships as a historically defined phenomenon (Rowlands 1999; Scubla 2002) instead of an autonomous symbolic system that could only be understood in terms of its own internal symbolic structure. That of course leads to the differences and variations within different organizations, unlike previous trends that tended to seek unicity or universal phenomena. Conversely, the focus is now on the idea that divine kingship manifests itself very differently in various areas of the world precisely because it is shaped by historical, political, and cultural factors (Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume). If we agree with Graeber and Sahlins's proposal (2017b), this type of political power never really ends, "even when kings are gone—even when they are deposed by popular uprisings—they are likely to linger in ghostly form, precisely as such a unifying principle" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017b:12), and divine kings continue in some way to rule within republics, as suggested by Danièle Dehouve for Mexico (2017). If so, this clearly raises the question of the validity of a concept that does not define any specific society at all but rather the tendencies in the modalities of political power relations. Indeed, given that divine kingship models are so diverse, represent so many different layers of anthropological debates, and embrace such a broad range of political power relationships, we might ask ourselves if this category is really an efficient way of understanding a specific kind of society. However, to paraphrase Graeber and Sahlins, divine kingship is a category that, just like kings, appears remarkably difficult to get rid of.

II

WARRING KINGDOMS

3

Nostalgic Kings

The Rhetoric of Terminal Classic Maya Inscriptions

NIKOLAI GRUBE

One of the truisms of Maya archaeology is that the Classic collapse cannot be explained monocausally but that it can only be explained as a combination of various factors. However, multifactorial explanations also imply that they are nonbinding and ultimately shy away from the responsibility of defining a factor or a certain combination of specific factors as the cause of the collapse phenomenon. On the other hand, it is also quite obvious that a single factor cannot be sufficient to interpret the many facets of the collapse and its different local manifestations. Any explanatory approach must be tested to explore which aspect of the collapse phenomenon it claims to interpret because most authors today agree that this complex and multifaceted phenomenon, which we simply label "collapse," did not take place in a single step. As pointed out by the authors of the introduction, we can now identify three distinct moments of collapse. The first refers to the collapse of the political system, which resulted in the disintegration of the geopolitical system of the southern lowlands. This rupture of the political system opened the way for a process of urban desertion. The demographic collapse was a third component of the collapse and resulted in the almost total abandonment of the lowlands by the beginning of the Early Postclassic period. These three collapse phenomena occurred in this order in the entire Maya Lowlands, including the northern lowlands, although this statement undoubtedly simplifies the many local developments (see Demarest et al., eds. 2004; Aimers 2007). Theories that deal with the end of sacred kingship cannot explain the abandonment of cities, and, conversely, theories about the effects of extreme droughts and local climate change may not explain the collapse of the Maya political system. The many theories that give responsibility to climate change published in recent years cannot provide convincing reasons why the

collapse phenomenon first manifests itself in the environment of royal courts as it is one of the universals of all complex societies that the upper segments of societies have the lowest vulnerability to catastrophic events. On the other hand, the rupture of dynasties and the failure of political institutions of Maya states that we cite as evidence for the disintegration of the political system of the southern lowlands cannot explain, or can only indirectly explain, the abandonment of cities and their rural hinterland by the resident population. This makes it clear that it is necessary to develop separate but causally connected explanatory models for the different episodes of the collapse.

A particular challenge is to understand how these three moments of collapse are connected to each other. Why did urban life gradually dissolve in the cities after the disappearance of the old royal courts? And why did these processes trigger a demographic catastrophe?

In this chapter I focus only on the first, the political collapse. By this I mean those aspects of collapse that from the outset were considered emblematic indicators of the Maya collapse: the end of the stela tradition and the construction of monumental architecture, and thus the end of the "great tradition" of the Classic Maya, which goes hand in hand with a monumental transformation of the society as a whole that finally leads to the manifestation of the Maya in the Postclassic. The political collapse consists in the rapid disappearance of dynastic kingship and its ruling institutions. It is not possible to precisely define the beginning of this process of collapse because in fact there have been "small collapses" throughout the entire Late Classic history. For example, the transition from the Late Preclassic to the Early Classic already is marked by the abandonment of numerous urban settlements (El Mirador, Nakbe, Cerros, Yaxnohcah). However, we do not know what role the political institutions played in this Preclassic collapse. Other, better understood small collapses are the so-called hiatus of Tikal, between 562 and 692 CE; the end of the old Naranjo dynasty after the conquest of Naranjo by the Kaanul dynasty in 636; the so-called hiatus of Caracol in 680–798; or the 17-year-long phase without significant construction activity in Copán after the demise of Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil in 738 (Martin and Grube 2008). In all these cases, however, the old order was restored after a few years. Regeneration distinguishes the small, local collapses from the large collapse of the ninth and tenth centuries. Also, the Maya themselves, at least those who were among the literati, seem to have recognized a difference between the small collapses and the great collapse of dynastic kingship as a whole. I would like to place this emic perspective in the perception of collapse at the center of this article. More precisely, I am interested in examining

the rhetoric of the public monuments and the way they reflect the radical changes in the social and economic composition of the lowlands during the Terminal Classic period and the strategies with which the lowland courts react to these changes.

War Narratives in the Late Classic and Their Absence in the Terminal Classic

Political crises in the Maya Lowlands are dynastic crises. The cause for almost all dynastic crises of the Classic period were war events that led to the extermination of royal families or the capture of kings and their heirs to the throne. Although in many places the resulting power vacuum could be absorbed by members of the nobility, the disempowerment of the king usually goes hand in hand with the abandonment of monumental activities and the written record. This suggests that war was also a decisive factor in the great collapse.

Figure 3.1 provides an overview of all war events of the Classic period recorded in the Maya writing. It is based on the evaluation of the entire corpus of Maya hieroglyphic writing in relation to the verbal expressions that, according to our present knowledge, refer to war activities: *pul,* "burn"; *jubuy u took' pakal,* "lay down of arms"; *chuk,* "seize, take prisoner"; *ch'ak,* "decapitate"; *och ch'een,* "enter the cave/sanctuary"; and the semantically transparent but linguistically undeciphered "star war" verb. The analysis of the occurrence of these verbs shows that until the end of the Early Classic period, written reports on wars were rare; until 9.9.0.0.0 (613 CE) there were never more than five war events per *katun* period. With the splitting of the Kaanul dynasty in 635, the establishment of a new capital in Calakmul and the military expansion in Katun 9.10.0.0.0, the number of wars increased by three times the previous number. In the following *katun* periods the war reports remain constant at a high number (with a peak in the Katun 9.13.0.0.0, which can surely be explained by Calakmul's first defeat against Tikal; Martin and Grube 2008:44–45). But the table also shows that there was an explosive increase of war events in Katun 9.18.0.0.0. In this *katun* 33 war events are recorded, which is more than twice as much as in the previous *katun.* Obviously, in the years between 790 and 810 CE, there was an escalation of wars in the Maya Lowlands. A closer look reveals that many of these wars are parts of longer and more detailed war narratives in which conflicts are reported that have caused the extinction of cities and entire regions. Piedras Negras Stela 12 and La Mar Stela 3 both report on war campaigns against

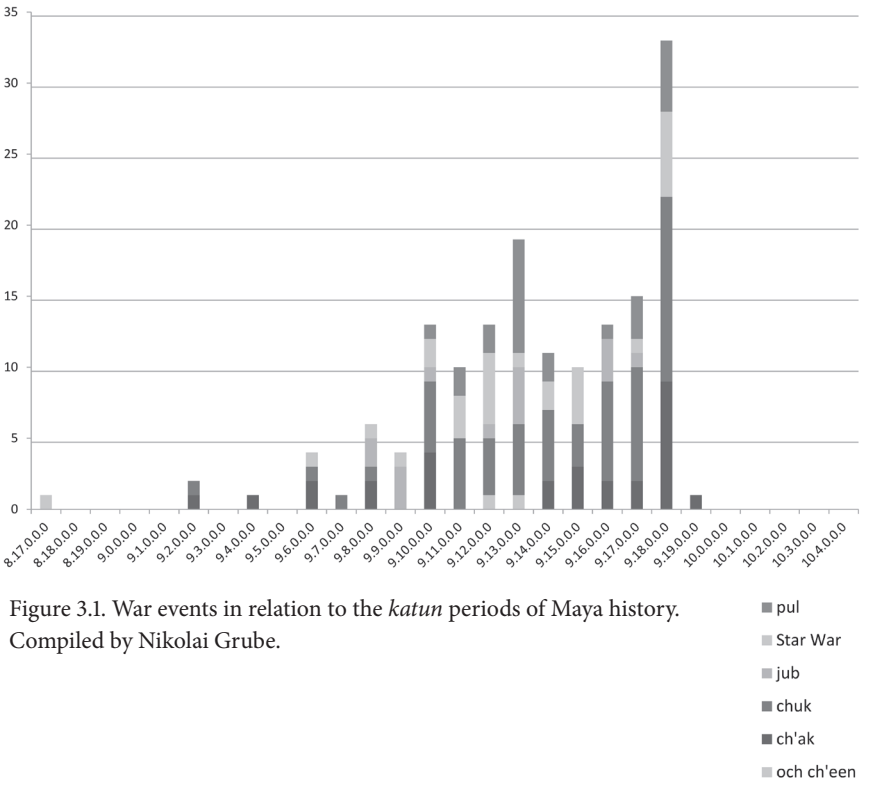

Figure 3.1. War events in relation to the *katun* periods of Maya history. Compiled by Nikolai Grube.

places in today's Tabasco, Santa Elena, and Pomona in the years between 787 and 792 CE (García Juárez 2016). The central theme of the wall paintings of Bonampak is a raid on Lacanha in 786 CE and the display of prisoners made thereby (Miller and Brittenham 2013:68–72). The last two written documents of Yaxchilan are also detailed war narratives. Hieroglyphic Stairway 5 supplies a lengthy sequence of captures up to the year 800, listing prisoners from Motul de San José, Lakamtun, La Florida, and Hix Witz / Zapote Bobal (Martin and Grube 2008:135). Lintel 10 from Yaxchilan is a war narrative that culminates in the final passage, where Ruler 7 from Piedras Negras is named as the captive of Yaxchilan's king, K'inich Tatbu Joloom (Houston et al. 2001). While these texts tell of war campaigns against places in Tabasco, the Usumacinta region and the central Peten, Naranjo's Stelae 12 and 35 as well as the recently found Komkom Vase from Baking Pot contain detailed descriptions on military encounters in the eastern Peten and the Belize valley (Helmke, Hoggarth, et al. 2017; Helmke et al., Chapter 7, this volume). Stela 12 begins with attacks against three locations—probably satellites of Yaxha—within a few days of each other in 799, leading to assaults on the city itself and the

final defeat of the Yaxha king in 800. Other eastern wars are recorded on Altars 22 and 23 of Caracol. Altar 23 shows two bound captives, rulers of Ucanal and Bital (Chase, Grube, and Chase 1991). Taken together, it becomes abundantly clear that during the 20 years between 790 and 810, there had been an escalation of wars that affected and devastated large parts of the Maya Lowlands. Other areas of the Maya Lowlands, such as the Petexbatun region and Ceibal, had already experienced raids that led to the extinction of their dynasties (Demarest 2014; Demarest et al. 2014; Triadan 2012). However, in the 20 years before 810, these were not only single targeted raids that determined the war events in the Maya Lowlands as in the *katun* before, but in the decades before and after 800 CE the whole lowlands were seized by a wave of wars that carried away one dynasty after the other.

Rapprochement and Nostalgia

Figure 3.1 illustrates another phenomenon that helps us to understand the reactions of the written elite to the Armageddon of the royal houses. In the last hundred years of Terminal Classic between 9.19.0.0.0 and 10.4.0.0.0, the inscriptions have not recorded a single war event. This is all the more astonishing as the previous *katun* had by far the largest number of wars of all *katun* periods. Although representations of prisoners still appear in the iconography of stone monuments and also in the Pabellon Molded ceramics (Werness 2003), they are not recorded anymore on public monuments. Rulers of this late period continued to erect monuments for the celebration of calendrical rituals, but it seems that they avoided to mention the dates and circumstances of war events. There was certainly no collective decision to no longer address wars in the hieroglyphic texts. Nevertheless, this change in the rhetoric of monuments is undoubtedly an indicator of a change in the perception of the meaning of warfare. While kingdoms in the centuries before derived political and economic success from warfare, during the Terminal Classic period, war was seen as catastrophic and destructive. The fact that not a single kingdom continued the tradition of war narratives also shows that the apocalyptic consequences of the wars affected all of them equally. This silence in the inscriptions is in stark contrast with the abundant archaeological evidence for warfare during the Terminal Classic, such as the construction of fortifications and walls (Scherer and Golden 2014, 2018; Yaeger and Brown 2018) as well as the discovery of physical evidence of violence and conflict (Barrett and Scherer 2005; Demarest et al., eds. 2004).

The absence of references to wars from the inscriptions can be interpreted

Figure 3.2. Caracol Altar 12, dating to 9.19.10.0.0 (820 CE). Drawings by Nikolai Grube.

Caracol Altar 12

as an immediate reaction to the dramatic events of the preceding *katun:* everywhere in the Maya Lowlands, people had to experience destructive wars and saw with their own eyes how the institutions of power, which also gave them an identity and a sense of belonging, were wiped out. The written documents of the last hundred years of the Terminal Classic reflect this horror by constructing narratives that were no longer congruent with reality. Perhaps this was also a strategy of the remaining nobles to deny their responsibility for the global catastrophe and to remain silent about everything which would put in question their authority.

In fact, there is much to suggest that the royal courts of Terminal Classic were aware of the threat to the existing order, because the years between 790 and 820 are marked by a period of intense diplomatic activity. Former enemies who had been at war with each other just a few years earlier now

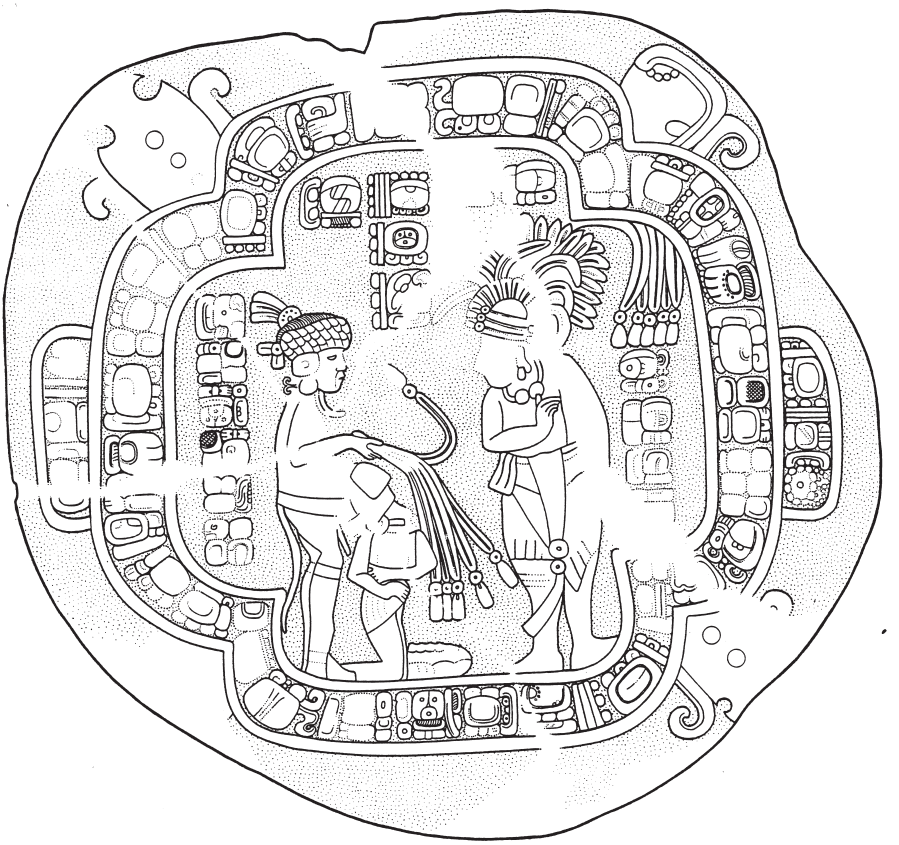

Figure 3.3. Caracol Altar 13, dating to 9.19.10.0.0 (820 CE). Drawings by Nikolai Grube.

Caracol Altar 13

allied with each other and are displayed on monuments during joint rituals. The hieroglyphic text of Quirigua's Structure 1B-1 contains the last date in Quirigua, falling in June 810. The text describes *katun* ending celebrations by Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat from Copán and Jade Sky from Quirigua. Although the text does not say that the two rulers conducted a joint ceremony, the presence of both names does signal some late rapprochement between the two rivals, who had seen a dramatic clash and the overturn of Copán's thirteenth king just 60 years before (Martin and Grube 2008:225). The relationship between Caracol and its western rival, Ucanal, sees a similar turn: on Altar 23 from the year 800 we see the king of Ucanal in the typical pose of a prisoner with his arms tied behind his back (Chase, Grube, and Chase 1991). The Altars 12 and 13, erected 20 years later, show Caracol's king, Toobil Yopaat, in the company of Papamalil, a lord from Ucanal, in a scene of gift exchange (Figure 3.2 and 3.3).

The lord of Ucanal, Papamalil, seems to have been an important figure in the political landscape of eastern Peten as he also appears on Naranjo's Stela 32 from the year 820. The monument depicts the young ruler Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil seated on a palanquin. The text records a pre-accession ceremony, the accession, and a visit of the ruler to Ucanal, where he is said to have used the palanquin of Papamalil. The same Papamalil also appears on Nakum Stela 2 of 849, where he is credited with the erection of the monument (Źrałka et al 2018). Taken together, all these occurrences suggest that Papamalil enjoyed an exalted status and that he was successful in establishing an alliance network in the eastern Peten/Belize region in the time between 820 and 849.

Maya kings probably also saw the need to strengthen the few remaining political alliances before the war-marked *Katun* of 9.19.0.0.0 ended. In this way the text on Ixtutz Stela 4 has to be interpreted, which reports of the erection of a monument for the *lajuntun* ending of 9.17.10.0.0 (780 CE) and an accompanying *chok* "scattering" ritual (Zender 2002). This was conducted by Aj Yaxjal B'aak the king of Ixtutz, but under the supervision of the king of Mutul, which in this case probably means Tikal.

In the last years before the collapse of the old political order, there seems to have been a rapprochement even between the former archenemies of the Classic period. In Oxpemul, a place that sees itself as one of Calakmul's successors, there is a mention of an interaction with "three lords of Tikal." Unfortunately, Stela 3, on which this text is written, cannot be dated precisely (Grube 2008:199). The last king of Tikal before the 60-year Terminal Classic hiatus is Dark Sun. According to the inscription of Lintel 2 from Temple 3, he is the son of Nuun Ujol K'inich, the predecessor, and a woman from Sak Wayis, a family or noble group closely associated with the *Kaanul* dynasty (Grube et al. 2013; Grube 2013a). In La Corona, the last monument in the city, Altar 4 from 9.18.5.0.0.0 (805 CE), registers the arrival of a woman on 9.18.0.16.16 9 (September 10, 791 CE), possibly within the framework of a marriage contract with the local family (it is not clear whether the name of the local ruler can be read anywhere in this long inscription). The original title of the woman is simply Ix Mutul Ajaw, suggesting that she came from Calakmul's archenemy Tikal (Stuart et al. 2014:441).

Altar 3 from Altar de Los Reyes in Campeche also dates to the same time (Grube 2008:Figure 8.6). The stela associated with the altar bears the date 9.18.10.0.0 (800). The top of the altar features a caption that states *k'uh[ul] kab uxlajuun [tzuk?]* or "divine lands, thirteen divisions" (Figure 3.4a). The

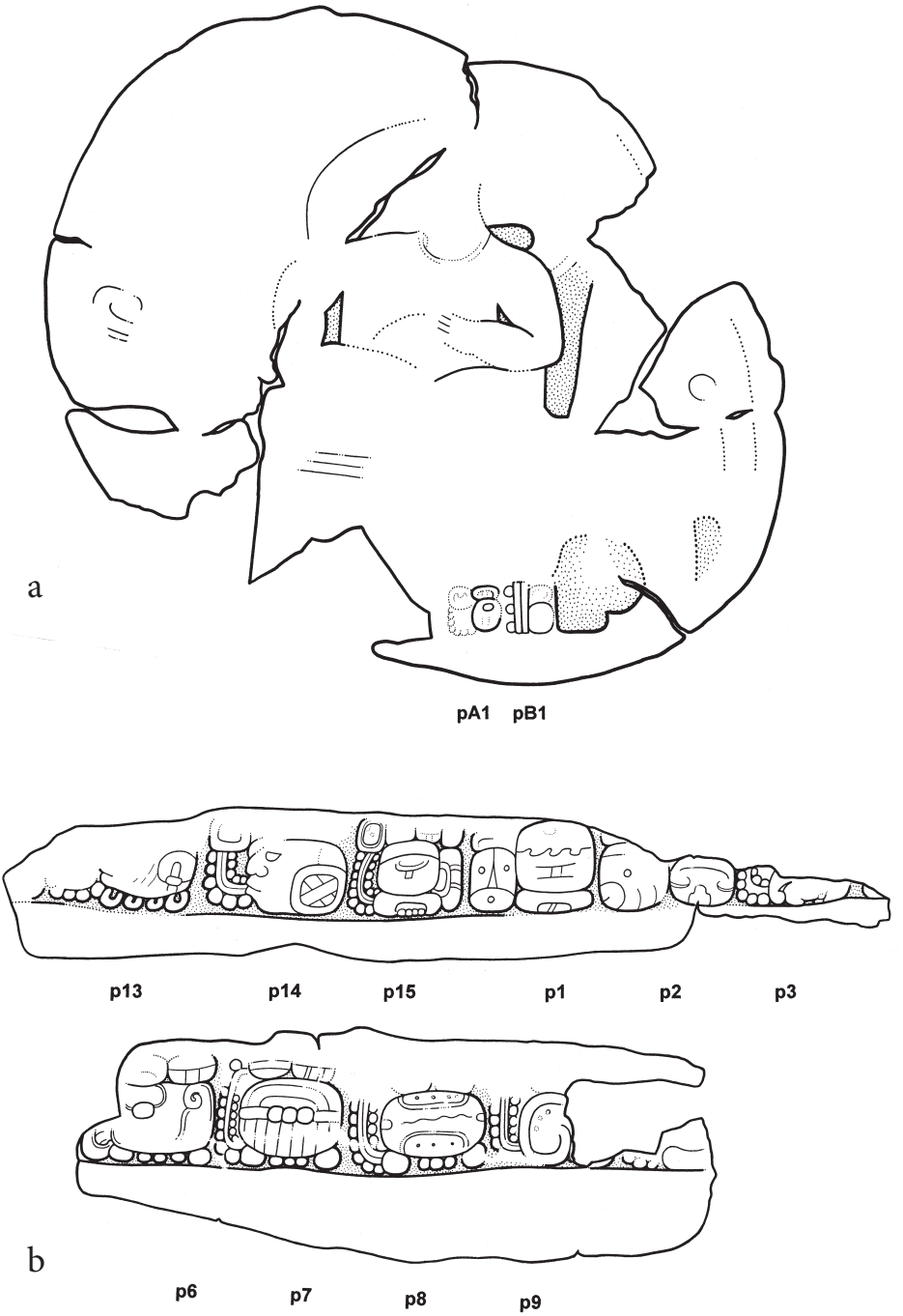

Figure 3.4. Altar de los Reyes Altar 3, from 9.18.10.0.0 (800 CE). (*a*) Top of the Altar 3; (*b*) Inscriptions on the sides of the altar. Drawings by Nikolai Grube.

Altar de los Reyes Altar 3

sides of the altar carry an inscription that likely begins with a statement such as "it is their thrones" and then continues by naming 13 emblem glyphs, although part of the text is missing. The list of preserved emblem glyphs includes "holy Mutul lord" (Tikal), "holy Chatahn person," "holy Baakal lord" (Palenque), "holy Kaanul lord" (Calakmul), "holy Ik'a' lord" (Motul de San José) and also includes two emblems that probably refer to Edzna and Altun Ha (Figure 3.4b). The altar presents a panorama of the political geography of the entire central Maya Lowlands, the royal dynasties of which, however, were already in disintegration at that time. The altar gives the impression of conjuring up an ideal political order. It is a kind of nostalgic view of a bygone, intact world, when the sacred order still existed.

The Disappearance of the Old Royal Houses

A consequence of the apocalyptic wars at the turn of the ninth to the tenth centuries was a rupture of dynastic kingship in the entire Maya Lowlands. Between 800 and 820 CE, all the deeply rooted royal dynasties of the great cities ceased to exist unless they had already been erased (as in the case of Palenque and Dos Pilas; Arnauld et al. 2017). Only in a few cases did a renaissance take place afterward. The many overview representations of Terminal Long Count dates in the Maya Lowlands can hardly provide a correct picture of the collapse of the royal dynasties (e.g., Bove 1981; Ebert et al. 2014; Aimers and Iannone 2014) because they do not take into account that in many cities the royal dynasties had ceased to exist much earlier and that the late monuments are usually the result of a renaissance, an attempt to restore the old order. In almost all cases, there were hiatus periods of several decades in which no monuments were erected any more between the end of the old dynasties and the last monuments. Against this background, the data for the disintegration of the Maya Lowlands must be reevaluated. It then becomes apparent that the collapse of the royal houses was indeed an event that—with a few exceptions—took place more or less simultaneously in the entire Maya Lowlands, immediately after the great wars and the short period of diplomatic activity. The consequences of this collapse were not the same everywhere but can be summarized in three forms of response: (1) The dynasties were exterminated and there was no attempt of later regeneration (Palenque, Yaxchilan, Piedras Negras, El Peru, La Corona, Yaxha, Cancuen, Copán, Quirigua, La Milpa, Nim Li Punit); (2) the old royal houses were extinguished and there was a hiatus and a local renaissance of royalty (Tikal, Caracol, Ceibal, Calakmul, Tonina); and (3) the local power base of the old

dynasties was so weakened that they had to relocate or split (Tikal, Naranjo, Aguateca).

Several of these responses could occur simultaneously, as can be demonstrated in the case of Tikal. The last king of Tikal who provides explicit family ties to his predecessors was Dark Sun. His last monument was Stela 24, commemorating the nineteenth Katun of 810. This date initiated a 60-year hiatus that seems to mark the end of any cohesive central authority at the city. Consequently, the important tenth Baktun period ending of 830 went unrecorded. However, there was at least one attempt to reestablish royal power. This was Stela 11, erected for the 10.2.0.0.0 Katun ending of 869 by Jasaw Chan K'awiil II, a king who claimed to be in the line of the dynastic founder Yax Ehb Xook. At the same time, local rulers of small sites in Tikal's vicinity such as Zacpeten, Ixlu, and Jimbal all began monumental programs using the formerly exclusive Tikal emblem glyph.

The end of the royal court of Calakmul looks similar to that of Tikal. The last dynastic monuments erected in this city were Stelae 67 and 69 (800) and Stelae 15, 16, and 64 (810). Due to the extremely poor state of preservation of the monuments, names and titles are no longer recognizable in the texts. A hiatus followed which implied that the end of the Baktun 10.0.0.0.0 (830) was not celebrated. In Calakmul we can also observe the attempt of a renaissance in form of Stela 61, which was probably erected around 10.4.0.0.0 by a king with the name Aj Took' (Martin and Grube 2008). This and other late monuments differ clearly in their calligraphy and iconography from the monuments of the Classic period. The centrifugal process of a weakened center that gave rise to an empowerment of sites in the periphery is also apparent in the Calakmul sphere. However, the weakening of the Kaanul dynasty began earlier than the actual collapse and was the consequence of Calakmul's military defeat in two wars against Tikal in 695 and 736 CE. On the one hand, this resulted in the abandonment of Uxul, which was firmly tied to the Kaanul dynasty by family bonds, in the middle of the eighth century (Grube 2020). On the other hand, places like La Muñeca, Oxpemul, and Nadzcaan initiated their own stela programs.

The same pattern can also be observed in Tonina. Here, too, the late dates of the last monuments are misleading because the dynastic collapse in Tonina took place as early as 806 with the erection of Monument 95 from the time of the reign of Ruler 8. The few later Stelae 104, 158, and 101 were only erected after a hiatus of 30 years and in a sad style that leaves no doubt that the late rulers of Tonina no longer had access to well-trained sculptors and artists.

An example for the relocation of a dynasty is Naranjo, where dynastic activity ceased with the erection of Stela 32. This was the end of the old royal house, at least in the city of Naranjo itself. The last king of Naranjo, Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil is possibly mentioned in Xunantunich, a place that may have become a retreat and fortress for the remaining members of the Naranjo dynasty (Helmke et al. 2010:109). Among the places that certainly benefited from the collapse of central authority in Naranjo were Nakum, whose monuments (with the exception of Stela 3/U) cover the period between 810 and 849 (Źrałka et al. 2018), Chunhuitz, and El Aguacate.

Caracol is an example for the rupture of the old dynasty and a short-term revival of the monumental tradition after 820. Stela 19 and the Altars 12 and 13 celebrate the half-*katun* ending of 9.19.10.0.0 in 820 and are the last monuments in the traditional format erected in the epicenter of the city. Caracol's penultimate king, K'an III, placed Stela 17 and is associated Altar 10 in an outlying residential group (Figure 3.5 and 3.6). There is also evidence on these monuments that the king shared his power with a second individual, or that new forms of joint rule were experimented. The earliest monument of his reign, dating to 835, was set up even farther away, in the secondary site of Mountain Cow. The last monuments of Caracol, Stela 10 of 859 and Altar 26 with the date 10.2.15.0.0 (884 CE), were placed in the epicenter of the city (A. Chase and D. Chase 2015a). Both sculptures, however, are far removed from the aesthetic canon of Classic time. Perhaps these changes already reflect transformations in political organization that anticipate similar processes on the Yucatan Peninsula (A. Chase and D. Chase 2015a).

Ceibal also falls into the same category. The three stelae (5, 6, and 7) from 810 CE are the work of a foreign usurper, Ajaw Bot. His Stela 5 was never completed. These monuments were also followed by a hiatus of 39 years before the monuments of Wat'ul K'atel marked the beginning of a renaissance in Ceibal, characterized by the erection of numerous stelae and an extensive but short-lived construction program (Bazy and Inomata 2017; Triadan 2012).

Machaquila is an example of a royal dynasty whose existence can be traced back to Classic times (Stela 13 with the date 9.14.0.0.0, 711 CE) but came under foreign domination. Only after the victory over the dominant neighbor, Cancuen, was Machaquila able to recuperate power and to engage in a new monumental program under King Ochk'in Kalo'mte' (Stela 2, 801 CE) (Barrientos 2014; Fahsen et al. 2003).

All these examples demonstrate that the collapse of the political institutions of the lowlands occurred at about the same time. This cannot be

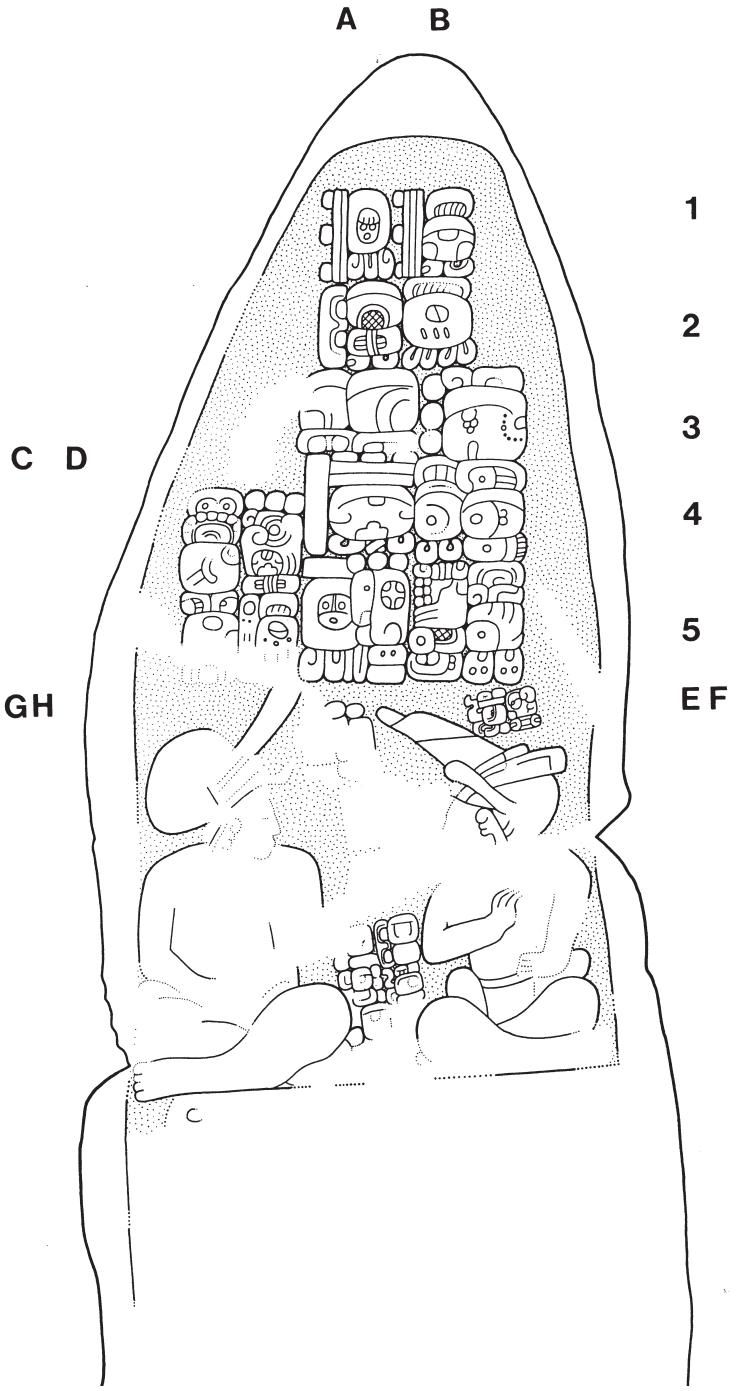

Figure 3.5. Caracol Stela 17 associated with Altar 10. Drawings by Nikolai Grube.

Caracol Stela 17

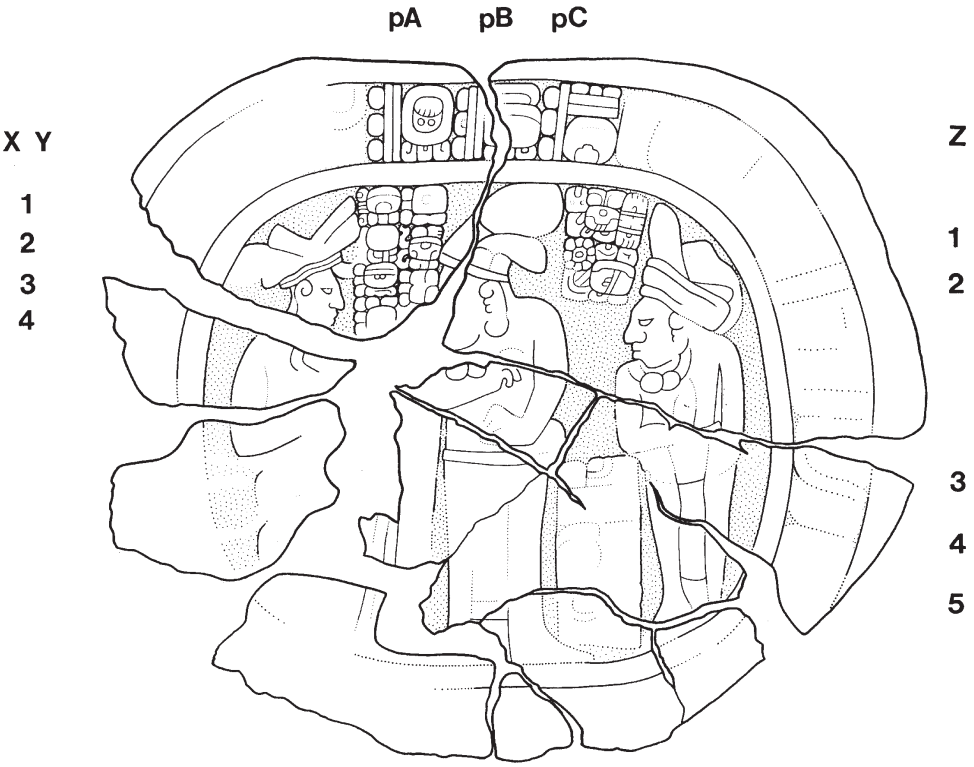

Figure 3.6. Caracol Altar 10 associated with Stela 17. Drawings by Nikolai Grube.

Caracol Altar 10

perceived if we focus only on the last monumental dates of a city. While it has long been popular to see the collapse in the southern lowlands as a process of long decline that took more than a century, it is clear that the disappearance episodes of the most important Classic royal houses were closely spaced in time. It also means, however, that a large part of the written texts and documents after 820 are no longer integrated into the traditions of the old families, dynasties, and cultural and aesthetic canons of the Classic period.

Deemphasizing History

During the Terminal Classic—I use this term here for the time between the abandonment of the royal houses in 820 and the last written dates—the rhetoric and the discourse of the hieroglyphic texts in the Maya Lowlands changed radically. Further, above I refer to the notable disregard of war events. However, the Terminal Classic texts display a lack of event history in general (Grube 1995). The previously important biographical stages in

the lives of rulers—birth, accession to the throne, and death—are no longer worth the attention of the Terminal Classic inscriptions. In general, it seems that the interest in kings as individuals with biographies had diminished. Kings appear in these texts as the subjects of ritual activities, as if they had transformed from divine warrior-kings to priests. In late texts, at most, their names are mentioned, but parentage does not seem to be of interest anymore.[1] Perhaps this is because the elites of the Terminal Classic no longer had transparent connections with the great Classic dynasties. The migrations during this period discussed by many authors (Cucina 2015; Demarest et al., eds. 2004; Demarest 2006; Price et al. 2014) might provide an explanation for this lack of connection between the late elites and the old and prestigious royal houses. Another reason for this disinterest in lineages and families, however, may be the deemphasis on royalty itself, whose power and authority have already shown dark stains because of the devastating wars between 790 and 810.

The exclusion of parentage as a topic of the texts also affects the presence of women in the inscriptions. Neither in Terminal Classic iconography nor in the written texts do women appear anymore. They are missing both as subjects of sentences and in parentage statements. This is also a characteristic feature of inscriptions from the northern lowlands—the northern Campeche, the Puuc region, and the northern plains (Grube 1994a). The majority of Terminal Classic texts from the northern lowlands are autoreferential dedication texts. In the southern lowlands such autoreferential inscriptions focusing on the production and consecration of objects with great intrinsic value are lacking in the Terminal Classic. This can also be seen in the absence of scribal signatures on monuments, a phenomenon that can probably be explained by a lack of appreciation of the work of artists and the lacking support of workshops (Houston 2016). Instead, Terminal Classic inscriptions from the southern lowlands concentrate thematically on calendric ritual. The usual verbal expressions of these late texts are (without claim to completeness) *chok ch'aaj,* "scattering drops / incense"; *k'al tuun,* "stone binding"; *mak u way,* "closing the cache"; and *il,* "see, supervise." Apart from the celebration of calendar periods at "round dates," there are virtually no nonround dates in these impoverished Terminal Classic texts, a consequence of the diminished interest in event history. I interpret the altered rhetoric of the Terminal Classic as a reaction to the collapse of dynastic kingship with its focus on the exalted person of the sacred king. What remains is an emphasis on ritual, which in its regularity provided a meaningful structure in an increasingly chaotic world.

Summary

The epigraphic view of the collapse helps us to understand the processes that led to the great apocalyptic crisis of dynastic kingship. The escalation of wars and conflicts following the disintegration of the great hegemonic networks of the Kaanul and Mutal dynasties culminated in an explosion of violence in the years between 790 and 810 CE. It seems that at the same time the remaining royal houses became aware of the catastrophe triggered by the wars. One consequence of this is a short period of renewed diplomatic activity, joint rituals, and a nostalgic attempt to restore the old networks. This short phase of rapprochement ended around 820 CE. By this time almost all old dynasties seem to have disappeared. This rupture apparently took place simultaneously nearly everywhere, with the exception of those places whose royal houses had already been the target of attacks and had therefore experienced an earlier decline. The disappearance of the royal courts is not a "slow collapse" (Storey and Storey 2017) and did not last for decades but was a process of a few years. I suggest using the label Terminal Classic only for the following five *katun* periods in which inscribed monuments were still erected. This was a period when most of the old royal houses had collapsed, although a few survivors had made attempts to revive the old order. This period is accompanied by a multitude of radical changes in the writing and iconography of monuments and a deemphasizing of kingship as the source of power and authority. The question of how the fall of the royal houses ultimately contributed to the demographic abandonment of the cities is one of the central research questions for the future and is not discussed here. But there is no doubt that the Maya society of the Terminal Classic was exceptionally weakened by the wars, the disappearance of the royal houses, and the collapse of its political institutions. In this situation, the surviving population must have become extremely vulnerable to external threats and disasters such as drought and climate change.

Note

1. There are a very few exceptions. Terminal Classic parentage statements are found on Machaquila Stela 6 from 836; on the Zacpeten Altar 1, dating to 830; on the so-called Josefowitz Stela of unknown provenance, dating to 864; and on Jimbal Stela 2 of 889. Jimbal Stela 1 seems to mention only the father of the current king, not the mother.

4

Waves of Political Ruptures during the Terminal Classic in the Pasión and Other Regions of the Maya Lowlands

TAKESHI INOMATA

The so-called Classic Maya collapse has long been thought to be a long, gradual process with significant variation in its process among different regions. There is, however, increasing evidence suggesting that this process was marked by waves of political disruptions that affected many polities across regions synchronously. I believe that the view of a gradual, variable process derived from inaccurate chronologies and from overemphasis on the final moments of collapse or the last inscribed dates at the expense of preceding trajectories (see Ebert et al. 2014; Hamblin and Pitcher 1980). Ceibal, for example, has often been seen as a survivor of the initial turmoil, but our research results show that this center also experienced profound political disruptions at the same time as its neighbors, long before its final abandonment (Bazy and Inomata 2017; Inomata, Triadan, et al. 2017).

Ceibal and the Petexbatun region exhibit the early signs and most drastic examples of political disintegration in the Maya Lowlands. In this chapter I first summarize these patterns in the southwest and then examine their correlations with the processes in other parts of the Maya Lowlands. The mounting tension and conflict among rival polities in the early eighth century led to the first wave of rupture around 760–770 CE, but its effects are less clear outside the Pasión region. The second wave hit the southwestern lowlands hard around 810 CE and affected other parts of the southern lowlands. The third wave that occurred between 850 and 950 CE was less abrupt but involved the northern peninsula as well. These processes provide an important basis with which to examine the decline of divine rulership in lowland Maya society (Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume; Andrieu, Chapter

2, this volume). I define the Terminal Classic period as the time of political disruptions after the major wave of rupture around 810 CE. It is archaeologically recognized with the appearance of new ceramic types, including fine paste wares of Altar Orange and Tres Naciones groups. The end date of this period varies in different regions. In the Pasión region, most settlements were abandoned by 950 CE.

Ceibal and the Petexbatun Region

The results of various research projects have provided significant data on political declines at Ceibal and in the Petexbatun region (Demarest 2006; Demarest et al. 2014; Demarest et al. 2016; Houston 1993; Inomata 1997; Inomata 2007a; Inomata and Triadan 2010; Willey 1990). Initial signs of political problems were signaled by the militaristic expansion of the Dos Pilas dynasty. In this process, Ceibal was defeated by Dos Pilas in 735 CE. After this event, the Dos Pilas dynasty appears to have directly controlled Ceibal, and economic activities at Ceibal declined noticeably (Bazy and Inomata 2017; Smith 1982). This process probably represents increasing tension and conflict among dynasties and the early stage of intensification of war.

The success of the Dos Pilas dynasty ended abruptly. It appears to have been defeated in 761 CE, possibly at the hands of the nearby dynasty located at Tamarindito and Arroyo de Piedra (Gronemeyer 2013). The elites left Dos Pilas and stayed at the secondary capital of the dynasty, Aguateca. Despite this victory, the Tamarindito dynasty ceased to erect monuments after 762 CE. A new ruler of Aguateca, Tahn Te' K'inich, acceded to the throne in 770 CE, and at Ceibal a ruler named Ajaw Bot took the throne in 771 CE. Ajaw Bot did not use the traditional emblem glyph of the Ceibal dynasty and probably did not belong to the Ceibal royal bloodline. The member of the original Ceibal royal house may have been expelled from the center sometime after the defeat by Dos Pilas. The fall of Dos Pilas, the disruption of the Ceibal dynasty, and the possible decline of Tamarindito represent the first wave of rupture (Figure 4.1). Altar de Sacrificios also fell silent after 771 CE, but it is not clear whether this center experienced a political disruption. There might be a later stela dating to 849 CE, and its occupation continued into the Terminal Classic.

During Tahn Te' K'inich's reign, the residents of Aguateca began to build concentric defensive walls. Cultural codes of combat as well as traditional standards of diplomatic negotiation were no longer respected in Maya society (see Aoyama, Chapter 5, this volume). The palace of Ajaw Bot was possibly

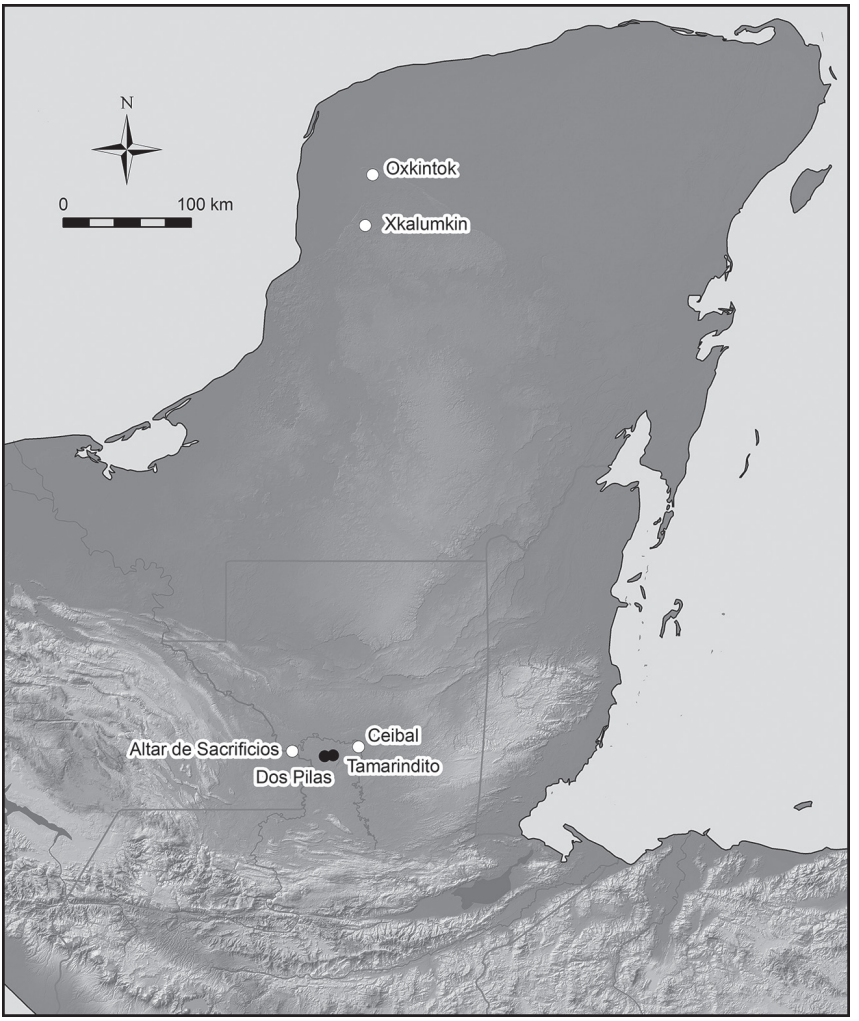

Figure 4.1. First wave of disruption. Centers with the last recorded dates or pre-hiatus dates around 760–770 CE. ● Possible political collapse around 760–770 CE. ○ Dynastic continuity or revival afterward.

located in Court B of Group D, a defensive location surrounded by gullies and an escarpment (Bazy and Inomata 2017). Aguateca was attacked by its enemies, probably around 810 CE. The royal palace was ritually destroyed and covered with trash taken from middens, and the entire center was soon deserted completely. Ajaw Bot may have followed a similar fate. Stela 5 was never finished, hinting at the sudden end of his rule sometime after 800 CE. Elite buildings around Court B of Group D were ritually destroyed and trash

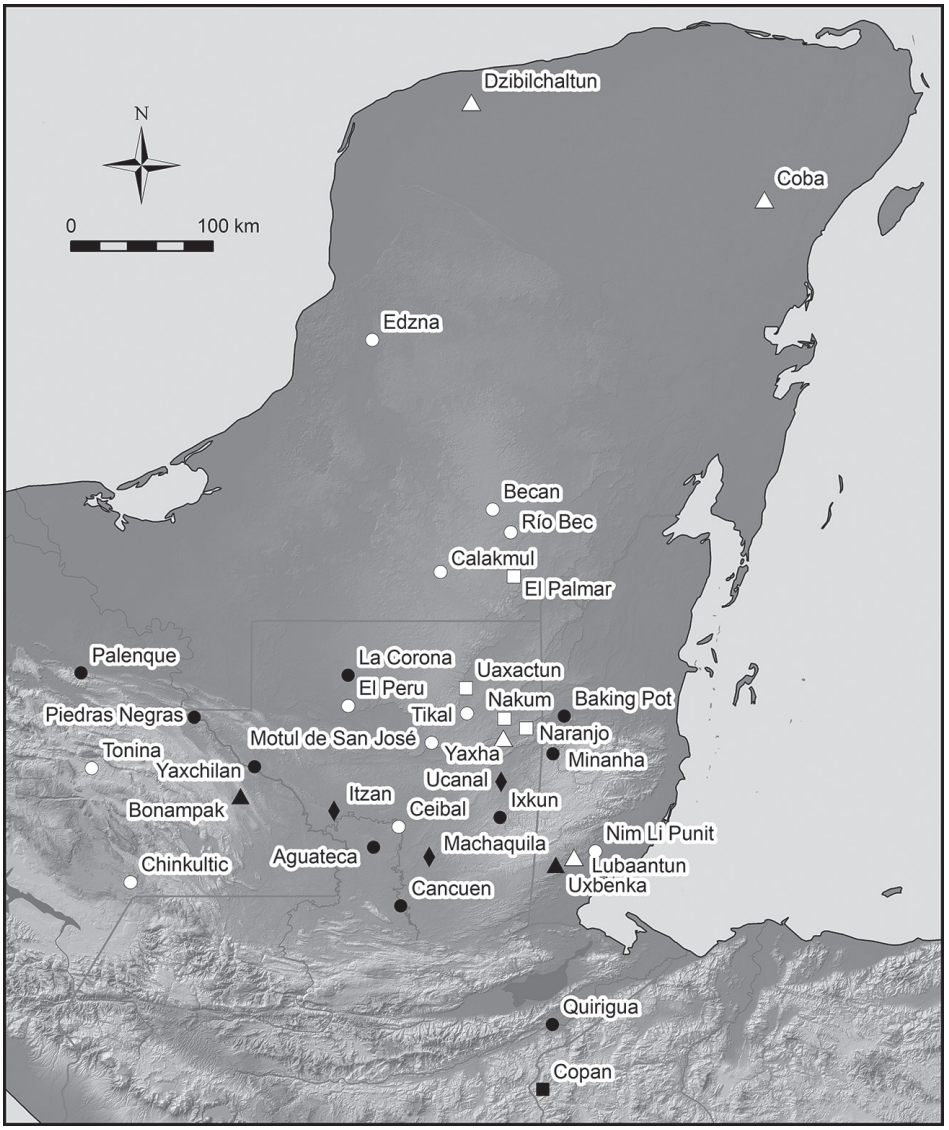

Figure 4.2. Second wave of disruption. Centers with the last recorded dates or pre-hiatus dates before 800 CE: ▲ Possible political collapse around these dates; △ Dynastic continuity or revival afterward. Centers with the last recorded dates or pre-hiatus dates around 810 CE or with archaeological evidence suggesting political disruption around 810 CE: ● Possible political collapse around 810 CE; ○ Dynastic continuity or revival afterward. Centers with the last recorded dates or pre-hiatus dates after 810 CE: ■ Possible political collapse around these dates; □ Dynastic continuity or revival afterward. ♦ Centers that survived this wave of disruption (last recorded dates between 830 and 850 CE).

taken from middens were dumped over them in a manner similar to the treatment of the Aguateca palace. The desecratory termination of the palaces of Ajaw Bot and Tahn Te' K'inich may imply that their enemies or subjects detested these rulers. The fall of Aguateca and the end of Ajaw Bot's reign at Ceibal represent the second wave of rupture (Figure 4.2).

After a period of political vacuum, the dynasty of Ceibal was revived in 829 CE, with the arrival of a new ruler carrying the original emblem glyph of Ceibal, whose name is tentatively read Wat'ul K'atel (Schele and Mathews 1998). Elite activities returned to Ceibal, but the destroyed structures around Ajaw Bot palace were left in ruins. In the celebration of the period ending of 10.1.0.0.0 (849 CE), Wat'ul K'atel erected five stelae. In contrast to the strong militaristic theme of the previous era, his monuments appear to deemphasize war (see Grube, Chapter 3, this volume). Wat'ul K'atel or his successor moved the royal palace from the defensive location of Group D to the traditional center of Group A. The Terminal Classic revival of Ceibal may represent an effort to revive the system of divine rulership.

Subsequent rulers of Ceibal, however, increasingly adopted foreign symbols on their monuments, and the symbolism of divine rulership began to crumble along with courtly culture that sustained it. The presence of possible foreign personages on stelae diverges from the Classic convention. Stephen Houston (2008b) notes that inscriptions on late monuments included aberrant spellings and grammatical errors. Ceibal was abandoned soon after the last recorded date of 889 CE in the third wave of collapse (Figure 4.3). The royal palace was ritually destroyed and burned, but unlike the palace of Ajaw Bot, it was not covered by trash. The Postclassic materials, such as Augustine Red, Paxcaman Red, and Plumbate ceramics, that are sporadically found in the area were most likely left by small groups of migrants from other areas.

The First Wave of Disruption around 760–770 CE

Interdynastic competition intensified throughout the southern lowlands during the seventh and early eighth centuries, but the observable effects of the first wave of disruption around 760–770 CE were largely limited in the Pasión region. In the Puuc region, Oxkintok and Xkalumkin entered a hiatus in inscription dedication or recorded the last date around 751–771 CE, but it is not clear if they experienced political disruptions (García Campillo 1992).

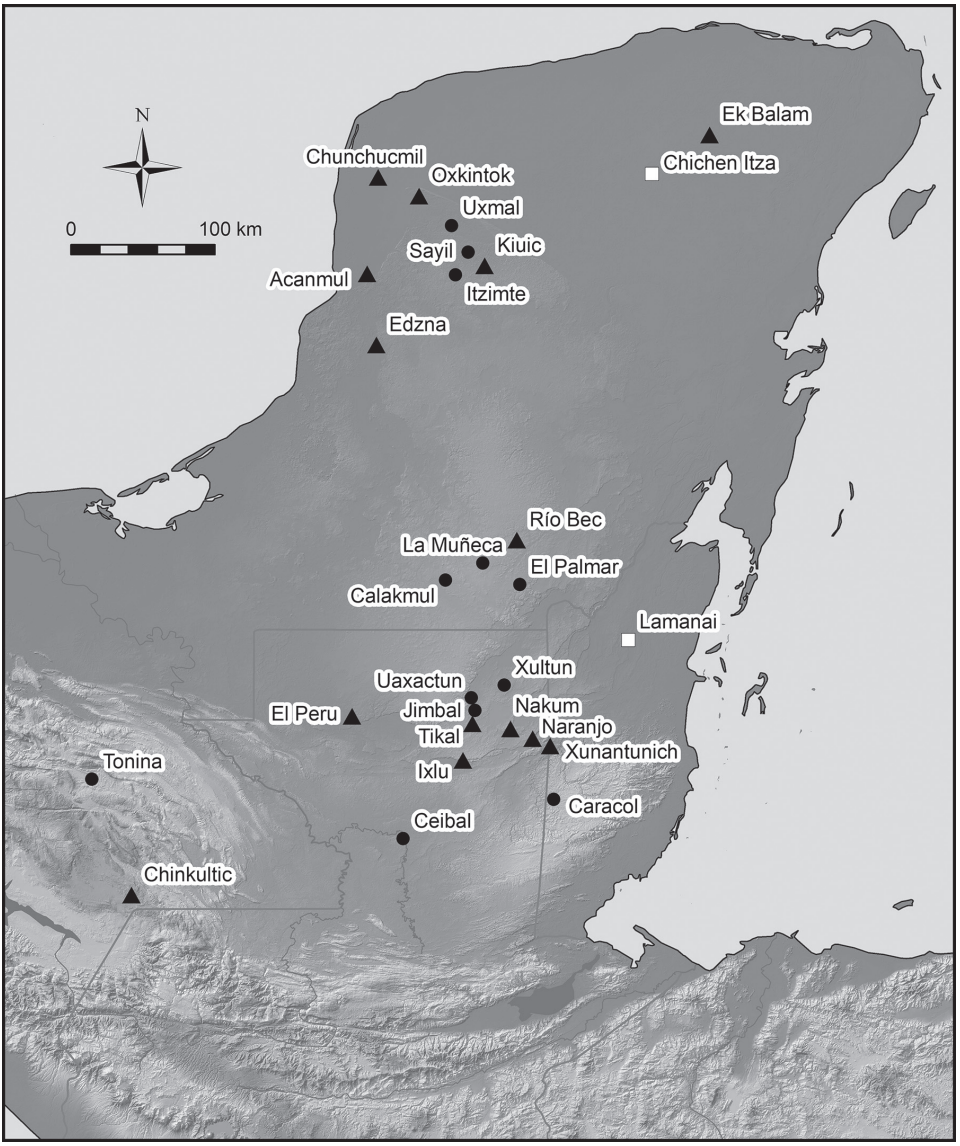

Figure 4.3. Third wave of disruption. ▲ Possible political collapse in the late ninth century. ● Possible political collapse around 900 CE or in the early tenth century. □ Centers that survived this wave of disruption.

The Second Wave of Disruption around 810 CE

Political Disruption in the Southern Lowlands

Like Aguateca and Ceibal, many centers in the southwestern lowlands along the Pasión and Usumacinta drainages suffered rapid dynastic collapse around 810 CE. Upriver from Ceibal, Cancuen met a swift and violent end similar to that of Aguateca. Many of its elites, possibly including the last ruler, K'an Maax, were killed and hastily buried, and Cancuen's palace was ritually terminated. The last date recorded at this center was 810 CE, carved on a shell that mentioned K'an Maax, possibly in a retrospective reference (Demarest et al. 2016; Demarest et al., Chapter 18, this volume). The fall of Cancuen dates around 810 CE, roughly contemporaneous with that of Aguateca. Along the Usumacinta River, the conflict between Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras escalated in the eighth century, and they established secondary centers, hilltop sites, and defensive walls in their frontier zone (Scherer and Golden 2014). Yaxchilan defeated its rival, Piedras Negras, in 808 CE, marking the end of the latter dynasty (Houston et al. 1999). Like the case of Tamarindito, the victor did not fare well either. No other monuments were dedicated at Yaxchilan after this event. Although some populations lingered both at Piedras Negras and Yaxchilan, the falls of their dynasties were rapid (Golden and Scherer 2013). At Bonampak, the last recorded date was 792 CE painted on the unfinished murals (Miller and Brittenham 2013), and at Palenque it was 799 CE (Martin and Grube 2008:175). The pattern at Tonina was similar to that at Ceibal. This western center entered a 30-year hiatus in monument erection after 806 CE, indicating that it also experienced a political disruption (Martin and Grube 2008:189).

These data show that many centers in the southwestern lowlands experienced rapid political disintegration at the beginning of the ninth century. Their contemporaneity suggests that those events were closely related to each other, although demographic trends were more varied. There are two notable exceptions to this pattern of rapid collapse in the southwestern lowlands. The small center of Itzan recorded the date of 830 CE although its Terminal Classic occupation appears to have been small (Eberl 2007; Johnston 2004). A more impressive level of late activity took place at Machaquila (Lacadena García-Gallo 2011).

The processes of political collapse in the central, eastern, and southeastern lowlands were similar and mostly synchronous but tended to be slightly more gradual. Some centers erected their last monuments before 810 CE, as

in the case of Uxbenka in 780 CE, Lubaantun in 790 CE (Wanyerka 2009), Yaxha in 796 CE (Grube 2000b), Ixkun in 800 CE (Laporte 2004), and La Corona in 805 CE (Canuto and Barrientos Q. 2011). Others, such as Motul de San José (Rice and Rice 2004) and Quirigua (Martin and Grube 2008:225), commemorated dates in 810 CE and then fell silent. Like Ceibal and Tonina, Tikal and Calakmul entered a hiatus in monument erection, after recording dates in 810 CE (Martin and Grube 2008:115). El Peru likely experienced a hiatus after 790 or 801 CE, and Edzna after 810 CE, which was followed by the erection of possible Terminal Classic monuments (Guenter 2014a; Pallán Gayol 2015). Where glyphic records are lacking, archaeological data point to political disintegration around 800–810 CE, as in the cases of Minanha and Baking Pot (Hoggarth et al. 2014; Iannone 2005).

These data indicate that the rapid political destabilization affected centers in the central, eastern, and southeastern lowlands nearly simultaneously with the southwestern cities. However, unlike the rapid dynastic collapse in the southwestern lowlands, some centers in the central and eastern areas persisted slightly longer. At Copán, for example, the dynasty was moribund around 810 CE, and the last unfinished monument recorded the date of 822 CE (Grube and Schele 1987). The last recorded date at Nim Li Punit was 810 CE, but an elite tomb was placed during the Terminal Classic period (Prager and Braswell 2016). Naranjo and El Palmar recorded dates in 820 CE before a possible hiatus (Martin and Grube 2008:83; Tsukamoto 2014a), and Uaxactun was one of the few centers that commemorated the 10.0.0.0.0 period ending (830 CE) before entering a hiatus (Valdés and Fahsen 2004). Caracol and the closely related center Ucanal were unique in that their dynasties continued to erect monuments well into the Terminal Classic period (A. Chase and D. Chase 2005a; A. Chase and D. Chase, Chapter 13, this volume).

Demographic Trends

Many areas in the central lowlands, including Tikal, Uaxactun, Naranjo, Calakmul, the Central Peten Lakes region, and the Three Rivers region (near the Guatemalan-Belizean border), experienced 80 to 90% population declines during the Terminal Classic period (Adams et al. 2004; Braswell et al. 2004; Culbert et al. 1990; Rice and Rice 1990; Valdés and Fahsen 2004). At La Joyanca, the destruction of a public building (long hall type) may have marked the fall of its political authority, but the population declined gradually during the Terminal Classic (Arnauld, Lemonnier, et al. 2013). In the southeastern zone, Copán and Quirigua were abandoned soon after the dynastic collapse

(Fash et al. 2004; Sharer 1991). The early Postclassic occupation at these centers most likely resulted from migrations of new populations (Manahan and Canuto 2009). The Belize River valley has traditionally been considered as an area with strong demographic continuity through the Terminal Classic period. This perception, however, may have derived from a poor resolution in chronology. Recent radiocarbon data suggest that the Terminal Classic period witnessed a substantial population decline (Hoggarth et al. 2014). As in the Pasión region and at Copán, Postclassic ceramics such as Augustine Red and Paxcaman Red were probably introduced to the Belize River valley after the period of low population. There were, however, some islands of population concentrations and even growth during the Terminal Classic, such as at Nakum and Xunantunich. Other centers in the central lowlands, such as El Peru and Yaxha, maintained a substantial population despite the apparent dynastic collapse (LeCount et al. 2002; Navarro-Farr and Rich 2014; Źrałka and Hermes 2012; Źrałka et al., Chapter 12, this volume).

In southeastern Peten and the adjacent part of Belize as well as in northern Belize, population decline was more gradual, and some areas even showed substantial demographic continuity and vigorous construction activity. In addition to Caracol and Ucanal, where the dynastic regimes persisted, the southeastern Peten centers of Ixtonton, Sacul, Calzada Mopan, Ucanal, El Chal, and El Chilonche exhibited substantial construction activity during the Terminal Classic (Laporte 2004). Northeastern Belize, including Pulltrouser Swamp and Lamanai, exhibited even stronger demographic continuity through this period (Graham 2004; Masson and Mock 2004). The Río Bec region continued to prosper during the ninth century although it experienced a hiatus in the dedication of inscriptions after 809 CE and its population may have declined 60% (Nondédéo et al. 2010; Nondédéo, Arnauld et al. 2013). Becan may have undergone temporary abandonment (Ball 2014), and its regional population decreased by roughly 80%. The center, however, resumed substantial construction activity during the Terminal Classic period (Ball 2014; Fry 1990; Nondédéo et al. 2010).

Despite the variation in the degrees of demographic decline, an important question is its timing. Did many areas of the southern lowlands experience population declines around 810 CE as in the case of the Pasión region? In other words, what is the beginning date of the Terminal Classic period, in which the depopulations are believed to have occurred? Although the beginning of the Terminal Classic period is often dated to 830 CE, the new data from Aguateca and Ceibal, as well as from Cancuen (Forné et al. 2010), indicate that some Terminal Classic ceramics began to appear around 810

CE. Similar revisions in chronologies are probably necessary for other parts of the southern lowlands. At Tikal, the Terminal Classic period was dated to 850–950 CE (Culbert 1993), and many researchers working the central and eastern lowlands adopted this chronology, leading to the common perception that population loss and political collapse in these areas started around 850 CE. However, Tikal lacks dated monuments for the period between 810–869 CE, and the basis of this Terminal Classic dating is tenuous.

More recently, through correlation with a dated monument at Nakum, Jarosław Źrałka and Bernard Hermes (2012) argue that Terminal Classic ceramics began to appear at this center by 815 CE. This dating may accord with that from Xunantunich, where badly needed radiocarbon dates for this period are reported. Lisa LeCount and colleagues (2002) tentatively date the beginning of the Terminal Classic period at this Belizean center around 780 CE. I suspect that this date is affected by some old wood or redeposited carbon, and the beginning date is better placed around 800 CE or somewhat later. In addition, new radiocarbon dates from Baking Pot indicate that the Belize River valley experienced a population decline around 800 CE (Hoggarth et al. 2014). In other words, there may be no or little time lag in the introduction of Terminal Classic ceramics, and possibly in the onset of depopulation, between the Pasión region and the central-eastern lowlands. The population declines in many areas were probably direct outcomes of the political disruption around 810 CE.

Continuity in the North

In the northern part of the Yucatan Peninsula, patterns of political disruption around 810 CE are not clear. Dzibilchaltun stopped dedicating inscriptions after 790 CE (Hoggarth, Breitenbach et al. 2016), but it is not clear whether this reflected a political disruption. After 800 CE, many Puuc centers appear to have had population increases, and Chichen Itza became a major center. Coba continued to grow in size during the Terminal Classic period although the last known monument at this center dates to 780 CE (Andrews and Robles Castellanos 1985; Gronemeyer 2004). At Ek Balam, the first known king of this center, Ukit Kan Le'k, acceded to the throne in 770 CE, and the center prospered during the Terminal Classic period (Lacadena García-Gallo 2003; Ringle et al. 2004; Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume).

Recovery Attempts in 830–850 CE

Along with the revival of the Ceibal dynasty, a limited number of centers exhibited some signs of recovery. The 10.1.0.0.0 stelae of Wat'ul K'atel mention the rulers of other centers, including Tikal, Calakmul, and Motul de San José, Lakamtun, and an enigmatic place called *puh,* suggesting the reestablishment of dynastic diplomacy (Just 2006:256; Schele and Mathews 1998:185; Stuart 2000). Some centers, including Xunantunich and Nakum, exhibit increased construction activity. Xunantunich dedicated stelae between 820 CE and 830 or 849 CE, and Nakum at 815 and 849 CE (LeCount et al. 2002; Źrałka and Hermes 2012). Tonina resumed the dedication of inscriptions and monuments around 830 CE.

The Third Wave of Disruption around 850–950 CE

The decline of divine rulership and courtly culture apparent at Ceibal in the late ninth century is also observable in other parts of the southern lowlands. Compared to the rapid disruption in the second wave around 810 CE, this third wave of rupture was more gradual. Machaquila, which survived the earlier turmoil in the Pasión region, ceased to erect monuments after 840 CE (Graham 1967). Likewise, Ucanal fell silent after 849 CE although their populations continued (Martin and Grube 2008:115). During this period some small centers began to dedicate monuments, in some cases using the royal titles previously reserved for their overlords. Around Tikal, Ixlu and Jimbal erected stelae between 859 and 889 CE, and Oxpemul, Nadzcaan, and La Muñeca near Calakmul between 830 and 899 CE (Martin and Grube 2008). This trend probably reflects the weakening of divine rulers' authority.

Toward the end of the ninth century or at the beginning of the tenth century, some centers dedicated their last monuments, in many cases following decades of hiatus. Tikal erected a monument in 869 CE; Caracol, 884 CE; Uaxactun, 889 CE; Calakmul, 899 or 909 CE; Xultun, 889 CE; El Palmar, 884 CE; the Río Bec region, between 869 and 899 CE; and Tonina, 904 and 909 CE (Braswell et al. 2004; A. Chase and D. Chase 2015a; Houston 2008b; Martin and Grube 2008; Nondédéo et al. 2010; Tsukamoto 2014a). El Peru and Edzna may also have dedicated monuments around this time (Guenter 2014a; Pallán Gayol 2015). It is not clear whether these monuments represented another attempt to revive the system of divine rulership. Soon after these events, these dynasties collapsed and never recovered. Most regions in the southern lowlands experienced further population declines or complete

depopulations (Culbert et al. 1990). Arlen Chase and Diane Chase (2004a; 2005a) argue that Caracol was rapidly abandoned around 900 CE. In the Río Bec region, building activity almost ceased after 900 CE, and the area was nearly depopulated in the late tenth century (Taladoire et al. 2013).

This wave of political disruption also affected the northern lowlands, although chronological problems hinder a full understanding of this process. Julie Hoggarth, Breitenbach, and colleagues (2016) note that there were roughly synchronous declines of multiple centers in the region between 850 and 925 CE. Probably at the expense of other centers, Uxmal and Chichen Itza grew to be primary powers after 850 CE. It is generally assumed that Uxmal lost power after its last recorded date of 907 CE (Carmean et al. 2004; Dunning and Kowalski 1994), although Rafael Cobos and colleagues (2014) contend that its dominance continued through the eleventh century. References to the dynasty of Ek Balam disappear after 870 CE, although its population may have continued until the mid-eleventh century (Lacadena García-Gallo 2003; Ringle et al. 2004).

The declines of various northern centers appear to have involved war and violence, possibly wielded by Chichen Itza. Scholars have identified defensive features dating to the Terminal Classic period at multiple sites, including Uxmal, Ek Balam, Chacchob, Xkanha, Yaxuna, Cuca, Muna, Chunchucmil, Dzonot Ake, and Ake (Ambrosino et al. 2003; Bey et al. 1997; Dahlin 2000; Garza Tarazona and Kurjack 1980; Webster 1978). Many of these centers appear to have declined soon after the construction of walls, and other unwalled centers also experienced rapid political disruptions. The central part of Acanmul was destroyed in the late ninth century, and unfinished buildings found at various sites, including Labna, Xkipche, Oxkintok, Uxmal, Kiuic, Yaxche Xlapak, and Chunhuhub, suggest that the political authorities of these centers disintegrated abruptly (Ball and Taschek 2015; Carmean et al. 2004; Reindel 1997).

Conclusion

The Pasión region presents some of the earliest and most drastic cases of political disruption in the Maya Lowlands, but the waves of political rupture also affected other parts of the Maya Lowlands. Many centers declined roughly simultaneously with the episodes of political collapse in the Pasión region. Political problems in the seventh and early eighth centuries and the first wave of disruption around 760–770 CE appear to have been tied to rapid population growths, increasing competition among rival centers, and

the intensification of war (Demarest 2006). These early stages of political problems, and even the major disruptions in the second wave around 810 CE, appear to predate episodes of severe drought (Iannone 2014; Kennett et al. 2012; Medina-Elizalde and Rohling 2012), and they may have derived mainly from political and social factors. The synchrony of political decline in the southern lowlands in the second wave indicates that political systems of this area were tightly interrelated, whereas those in the northern lowlands may have formed a separate political sphere. The weak revival in 830–850 CE was interrupted possibly by challenges to the system of divine rulership or the inability to sustain it. Severe droughts that occurred in the late ninth century may have given devastating effects on the already weakened society systems, affecting both the southern and northern lowlands.

5

Warriors and the Transformation of Classic Maya Kingship

A Diachronic Analysis of Lithic Weapons in Copán, Honduras, and in Aguateca and Ceibal, Guatemala

KAZUO AOYAMA

Despite our knowledge from Maya hieroglyphic inscriptions of the ubiquity of warfare among the ancient Maya (Martin and Grube 2008), war is difficult to demonstrate archaeologically. In addition to inscriptions and iconography, potentially useful evidence for warfare in the archaeological record includes fortifications (walls and moats), weapons, human skeletal remains with signs of war-related trauma, incidents of violent destruction, settlement shifts to higher locations, and sudden disruption of cultural patterns such as changes in ceramic styles (Sheets 2003:290–294; Webster 1993:422–423). Unfortunately, the texts referring to war are not at all explicit about the motives for warfare or its nature (Stuart 1993:333). Many Classic Maya sites lack such inscriptions or art relating to the warfare. Moreover, most Classic centers are located in easily accessible terrains without fortifications and generally lack clear evidence of destruction resulting from battles.

We need to carry out systematic and diachronic studies of weaponry in different parts of the Maya area. Both detailed analysis of chipped stone weapon use, particularly using the high-power approach developed by Lawrence Keeley (1980), and more case studies of temporal and spatial distribution of possible weapons in the regional settlement system remain to be conducted in Maya archaeology. Present work is a continuation of previous studies to fill that gap (Aoyama 1999, 2005, 2007, 2009a, 2017; Aoyama and Graham 2015). Whether lithic points were used for human conflict, hunting, or other purposes should be determined based on detailed microwear analysis and their recovery contexts. If there were a large number of weapons,

particularly in public structure or elite residence (e.g., Sabloff 1992), and if these were documented along with other lines of evidence, such as violent destruction of structures, then an archaeologist can make a stronger argument for warfare. Among the Classic Maya cities, such as Tikal and Calakmul, most were abandoned gradually with inhabitants usually carrying away a large portion of their weapons and other belongings to their next residences. Identifiable ancient Maya weaponry is seldom recovered from datable contexts or contexts in which the use of the weapon is clear. Therefore, there are good reasons to conduct diachronic and spatial studies of possible lithic weapons in particular, from both primary and secondary contexts.

This chapter discusses the role of warfare in the Classic Maya political collapse by analyzing diachronic and spatial data on possible obsidian and chert weapons in Copán, Honduras, and in Aguateca and Ceibal, Guatemala. These lithic artifacts pertain to the Early Preclassic through the Early Postclassic period (1400 BCE–1050 CE) and can serve as sensitive indicators for reconstructing one aspect of long-term changing patterns of the warfare. I conducted detailed use-wear analysis on these artifacts based on a high-power microscopy approach to bring to light more empirical data relevant to ancient Maya warfare. This chapter contributes to the relatively undeveloped studies of the function of ancient Maya weapons as well as their temporal and spatial distribution patterns in the regional settlement system and provides important implications for understanding the role of warfare for rupture and transformation in Classic Maya divine kingship (see Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume) as well as offering suggestions from the line of evidence in the context of a conjunctive approach. The results of lithic analysis indicate that Classic Maya warfare served for a mechanism for removing divine kings from their previously divine status (see D. Chase and A. Chase, Chapter 16, this volume), and that demise of Classic royal dynasties represented the collapse of sacred or divine kingship.

The database of the present study consists of 210,152 lithic artifacts from Copán and the region of La Entrada in Honduras and from Aguateca, Ceibal, and other sites in Guatemala that I studied from 1986 to 2019. In 1987 I conducted an intensive experimental study of use-wear on obsidian and chert in Honduras in order to establish a framework for the interpretation of Maya stone-tool use (Aoyama 1999:33–47). The results of 267 replication experiments conducted in a range of worked materials permitted identification of use-wear patterns. Using high-powered microscopy techniques, I have conducted microwear analysis on 8,516 stone artifacts from the study regions.

The instrument used in the study was a metallurgical microscope

(Olympus BX60M) with 50–500× magnification and an incident-light attachment. Use-wear patterns were documented with an Olympus photomicrographic system PD-27 attached to a digital camera. Magnification of 200× was the most frequently used; 50× and 100× served primarily to permit identification of use-wear locations, whereas observation of use-wear details in specific areas of artifacts required 500×. In order to identify projectile-impact damage in lithic assemblages, I also examined macroscopic forms of damage associated with microscopic traces, such as longitudinal macrofracture, lateral macrofracture, distal break, distal crushing, and "spin off" fractures (Dockall 1997). Following Patrick Vaughan (1985:56–57), each portion of a lithic artifact with interpretable use-wear was counted as an "independent use zone."

Aguateca and Its Surrounding Areas

The archaeological investigations in the Petexbatun region of Guatemala have provided the best evidence for intensive warfare, which was certainly a proximate cause of the political collapse of the Petexbatun kingdoms in the late eighth and early ninth centuries (Demarest et al. 1997; see also Demarest et al., Chapter 18, this volume), although this process is not necessarily applicable to other parts of the Maya Lowlands. Archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic studies show that the Dos Pilas / Aguateca dynasty expanded its power through warfare and marriage alliances in the eighth century (Martin and Grube 2008). Aguateca probably served as the primary center of the Dos Pilas / Aguateca dynasty at a time of endemic regional warfare after the fall of its twin capital, Dos Pilas, in 761 CE (Houston 1993). This warfare was not caused by malnutrition or ecological catastrophe (Dunning et al. 1997; Wright 1997).

Aguateca occupied a highly defensible location on the top of a steep, 90 m escarpment (Inomata 2007a). During the reign of Ruler 5 of Aguateca, Tahn Te' K'inich (770–810 CE), the residents of Aguateca began to build concentric defensive walls over 4 km long. Its epicenter was burned down during an attack by an enemy or rival group around 810 CE. Elite residents of the central part of the city fled rapidly or were captured, leaving most of their belongings behind. The fall of Aguateca dynasty represents the second wave of political collapse in lowland Classic Maya society (Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume).

The 1996–1999 investigations of the Aguateca Archaeological Project First Phase, directed by Takeshi Inomata, Daniela Triadan, and their colleagues,

focused on the extensive excavation of rapidly abandoned structures in the central part of the city with the objective of examining the domestic and political lives of Classic Maya elites (Aoyama 2009a; Inomata and Triadan 2010, 2014). These excavations revealed the richest floor assemblages ever found at a lowland Classic Maya city. The Aguateca Archaeological Project Second Phase was designed to examine the foundation of Aguateca as a dynastic capital at a regional level (Inomata et al. 2009). I analyzed 28,990 lithic artifacts from in and around Aguateca between 1998 and 2007 (Aoyama 2007, 2009a, 2009b).

The production of chert bifacial points and other bifacial artifacts took place more intensively within the epicenter of Aguateca than outside it. The percentage (24.2%, $N = 925$) of bifacial thinning flakes among chert artifacts at the site core of Aguateca is much higher than that of the non-elite residences of Group M6-3 on the periphery of Aguateca (13.7%, $N = 295$), minor centers of Dos Ceibas (9.2%, $N = 58$) and Nacimiento (12.9%, $N = 383$) as well as the non-elite residences of the North Transect (13.6%, $N = 111$). Concentrations of small chert bifacial thinning flakes were found in some elite residences in the epicenter of Aguateca, suggesting that some elite household members manufactured chert spear and dart points on a part-time basis in or near their residences.

Rich assemblages of objects left in burned structures at Aguateca represent the closest parallel in the Maya Lowlands to the situation at Pompeii and provide a unique synchronic data set that allows closer access to the types, number, and function of chipped stone weapons of Classic Maya elites in higher resolution than the smaller number of remaining artifacts at gradually abandoned sites. Some 30 to 40 broken chert bifacial (spear or dart) points were found in each of the residences of elite scribes/artists and the royal palace at Aguateca. Judging by the presence of microwear in association with projectile-impact damage as well as the sizes (mean width = 36 mm, S.D. = 8.0 mm, $N = 28$), many obsidian and chert bifacial points were used as thrusting spears (lances) or as darts (Figure 5.1).

If one's objective was to kill or severely injure, projectile weapons were far outclassed by handheld shock weapons such as axes, maces, and bladed wooden swords. Based on the presence of microscopic traces, lateral edges of some chert bifacial points were also used as knives for the artistic and craft production of shell and bone ornaments, wood carving, and other domestic activities (Figure 5.2). Moreover, small quantities of side-notched, corner-notched, and unnotched prismatic blade points were manufactured from El Chayal obsidian at Aguateca at the end of the Late Classic period.

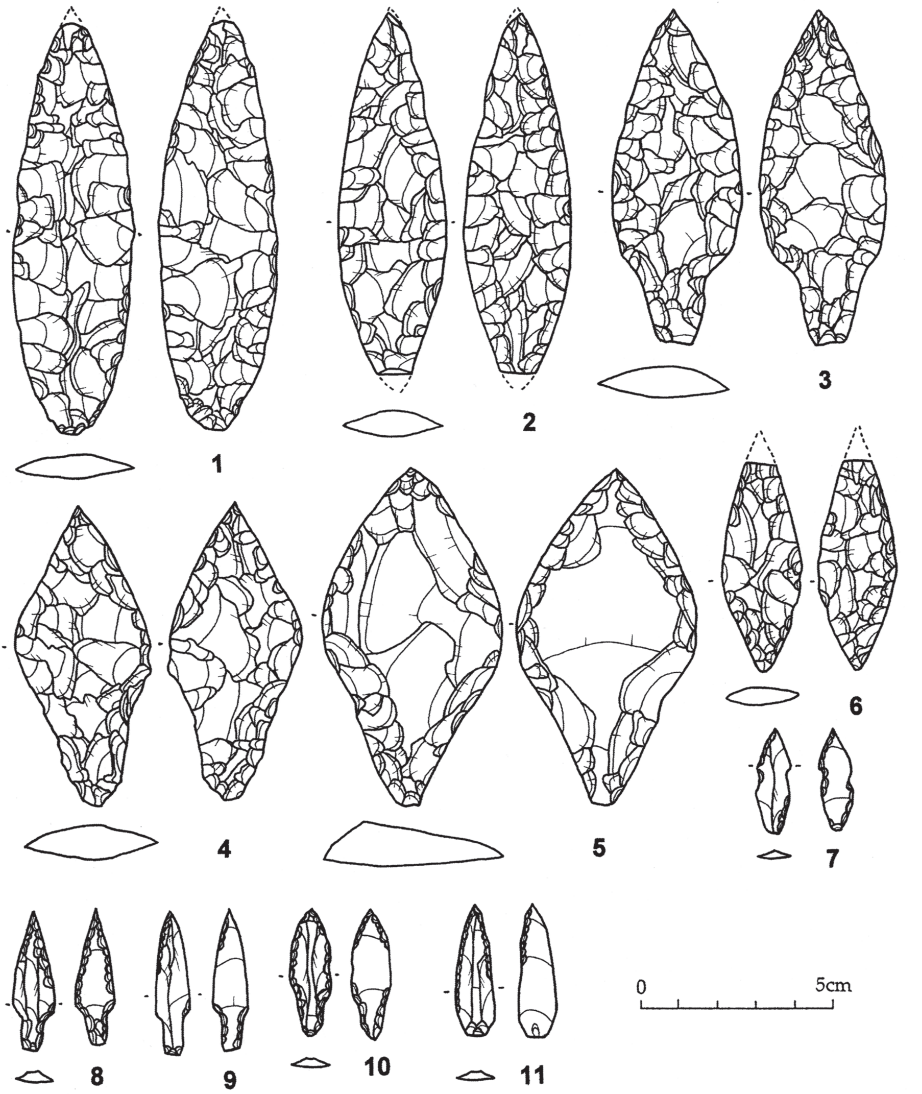

Figure 5.1. Chert and obsidian points from Aguateca, Guatemala. Seven (1–7) were manufactured from chert while the others were manufactured from El Chayal obsidian. Six (1–6) were bifacial points; one (7) was small point; and four (8–11) were prismatic blade points. Note projectile impact damage, such as longitudinal macrofracture on number 1, lateral macrofracture on number 2, and distal break on number 6. Drawings are in Japanese technical style. Each illustration shows the sequence of flake scars detachment. Flake scars, fissures, and ripple marks demonstrate the relationships of adjacent flake scars.

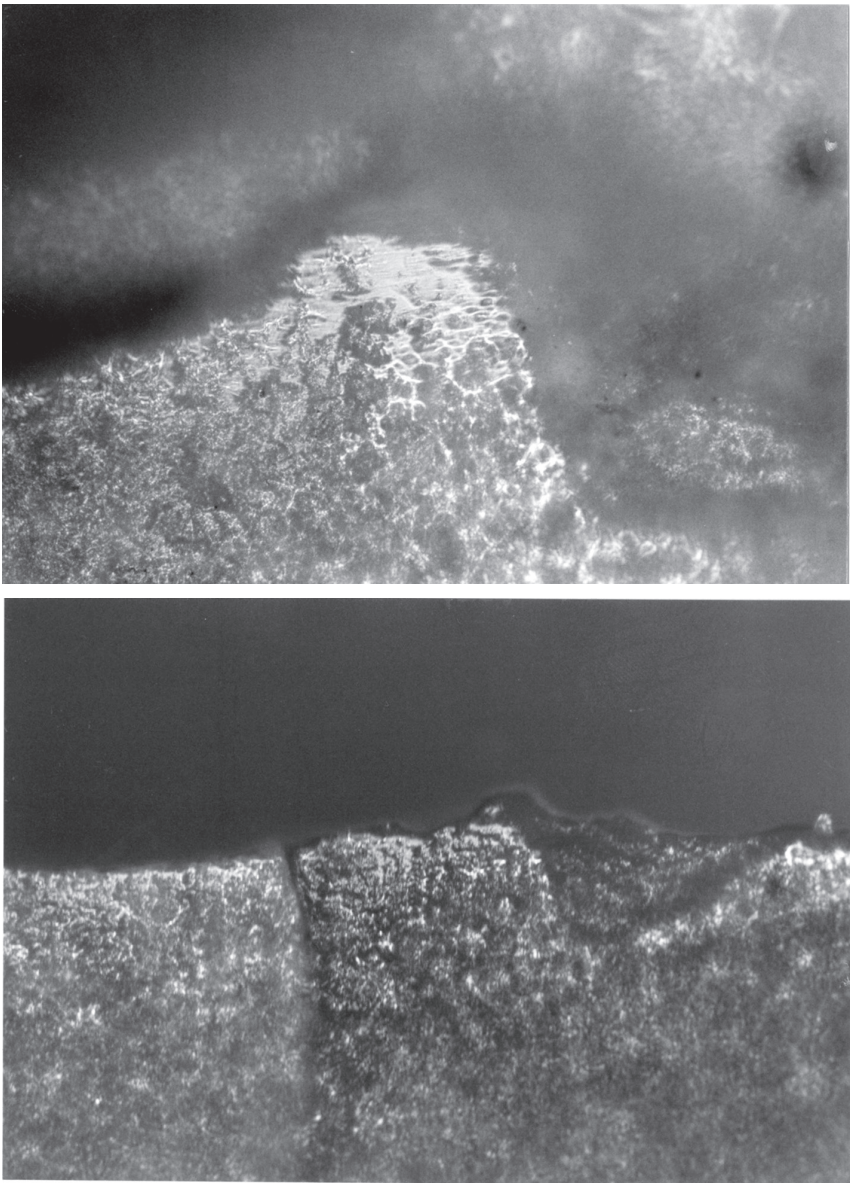

Figure 5.2. Examples of use-wear on chert bifacial points from Aguateca, Late Classic period (200×): (*top*) D2C type polish and parallel striations on a lateral edge used to cut shell or bone; (*bottom*) E1 type polish and parallel striations on a lateral edge used to cut meat or hide.

Results of microwear analysis indicate that both obsidian prismatic blade points and chert small unifacial points (mean width = 11.8 mm, S.D. = 3.6 mm, $N = 13$) were mainly used as arrowheads (Aoyama 2005:294). In total, each elite household at Aguateca had at least 35 to 45 chipped stone weapons or tools for craft production, including chert bifacial points, chert arrow heads, and obsidian prismatic blade points. In addition, Ruler 5 of Aguateca, Tahn Te' K'inich, appears to have possessed a couple of obsidian bifacial points that may have been status markers, reserved exclusively for the royalty at Aguateca. Because many weapons were used in the last battle, each household must have originally possessed many more pointed tools. Some complete and nearly complete points appear to have been stored in the royal palace, elite residences, and other structures, but most chert bifacial lance and dart points were snapped or otherwise broken.

The broken lance and dart points were scattered more or less evenly across the burned structures in the final occupation layers, as one would expect if they had been used in the fighting; they were not concentrated as would be the case in a midden or cache context. The residents of Aguateca, including elite scribes/artists, seem to have used most of their inventory of chert bifacial points during the final defense of the city. Without exception, the structures excavated in the epicenter of Aguateca burned to the ground at the time of abandonment. The large number of broken lance points and atlatl darts found in the epicenters strongly suggests that broken lances and atlatl darts were deposited in battle and that elites controlled the fighting. This, along with other lines of evidence such as the violent destruction of residential structures and the pattern of point deposition, further indicates that elite residents of the central part engaged fiercely in battle, and fighting involved hand-to-hand combat and personal contact.

The percentage of bifacial points in the total sample of chert artifacts at the epicenter of Aguateca (5.5%) is greatly higher than those outside of Aguateca (1.3%, S.D. = 0.07). Although the higher ratio of bifacial points at the epicenter of Aguateca is partly due to its rapid abandonment, I argue that it reinforces epigraphic, iconographic, and other archaeological evidence, which indicates that Aguateca dynasty collapsed in a state of endemic regional warfare toward the end of the Late Classic period in the early ninth century. An important implication is that the ruler and elite scribes/artists were also warriors. The lithic evidence of Aguateca perfectly matches Kevin Johnston's iconographic study on Classic Maya scribe capture and their finger-breaking custom during warfare of destruction (Johnston 2001). In other words, both the ruler of Aguateca and elite scribes/artists/warriors

who produced texts through which the ruler asserted and displayed power were targeted by the enemy. Both the royal family and elite scribes/artists at Aguateca used spears and arrow points for human conflict as well as for the artistic and craft production under enemy threat. The enemy conducted the desecratory termination rituals of the Palace Group but did not stay long at Aguateca. The areas outside the epicenter were abandoned shortly after the destruction of the epicenter itself, as if commoners—or at least those based outside the epicenter—were forced to leave (Inomata 2007a). Scant skeletal evidence was found to indicate that bodies had been left, although this is a risky statement in the tropics, where preservation is so poor.

Household archaeology at Aguateca suggests that some elite women may have engaged in the production of chert bifacial points and used them for defense of the city or other purposes. For example, Structure M8-4 ("the House of Mirrors") was the residence of a high-status male scribe who specialized in the production of shell and bone objects of high symbolic value and other royal regalia in a courtly setting (Aoyama 2007:20–21). Stone pestles and mortars that the courtier/scribe probably used for the preparation of pigments were found in the central room and in front of the south room, thus indicating that the courtier/scribe probably engaged in scribal and artistic work in these areas. Two bone artifacts uncovered in the central room carved with the Aguateca emblem glyph indicate that the residents of Structure M8-4 were high-status and trusted members of the royal court. The north room and nearby areas appear to have been associated with food preparation and storage.

A female household member seems to have mainly used the north room of Structure M8-4 and engaged in bone or shell and wood carving there, in addition to food preparation and textile production. In addition, the largest concentration of chert small bifacial thinning flakes in this structure was recovered from the north room, which suggests that it was the female household member who was engaged in bifacial point manufacture. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that 11 of the 36 chert bifacial points recovered from this structure were found in this room (Aoyama 2009a:128). Microwear analysis indicates that at least some bifacial points were used as lances or darts. The male scribe/artist may have used all of them. Alternatively, the larger number of bifacial points found in the north room suggests that the female household member may have used some bifacial points in defense of the city or other purposes. Some women from the Classic Maya elite may have played a more important role in warfare than previously thought. The epigraphic and iconographic records indicate that warrior queens ruled

autonomously, participated in battles, and captured enemies during the seventh and eighth centuries (Aoyama 2016; Aoyama and Graham 2015:12; Houston and Inomata 2009:146; Martin and Grube 2008:74–77). Although portraits of Maya warrior queens are rare in Classic Maya art, two stelae of Naranjo show Lady Six Sky (682–741 CE) trampling captives in the manner of a warrior-king. Similar depictions are also known from Calakmul (Martin and Grube 2008:74), Naachtun, and Coba (Reese-Taylor et al. 2009). At least some elite women at Aguateca seem to have acted as warriors in the final battle.

Copán and Its Hinterland

A series of large-scale international archaeological projects conducted in the Copán Valley have made it one of the most intensively studied regions in the Maya Lowlands (Fash 2001). It is situated above a tributary of the Motagua River in a section of western Honduras. The straight-line distance from Copán to the closest obsidian source at Ixtepeque (80 km) is shorter than for most Maya Lowland areas. Because of their sharper cutting edges, obsidian points should have caused heavier bleeding than those made from chert. Chert spear points, although less effective to kill or wound than those of obsidian, were prevalent in most Maya Lowland areas. At Copán, however, inhabitants took advantage of its unusual location near one of the primary obsidian sources for the Maya Lowlands and used mainly obsidian points rather than chert points. The pre-Columbian occupation of Copán began during the Early Preclassic period (1400–1000 BCE) and lasted until the Early Postclassic period (900–1050 CE) (Bell et al. 2004; Fash 2001).

From 1986 to 1995 I studied 91,916 stone artifacts from the urban core of Copán and on peripheral domestic occupations, nearby sites, and more distant centers such as those in the region of La Entrada in western Honduras to examine long-term changing patterns of the pre-Columbian Maya sociopolitical and economic organization (Aoyama 1999, 2001). Possible weapons from Copán include obsidian bifacial points ($N = 354$), obsidian prismatic blade points ($N = 80$) and chert bifacial points ($N = 119$) (Figure 5.3).

Beginning at the Late Protoclassic Bijac 2 phase (150–400 CE) and continuing into the Early Classic Acbi phase (400–600 CE), truly significant changes in society took place in the Copán Valley. Current evidence suggests that the production of bifacial points began during the Protoclassic period (50–400 CE) in the Copán Valley and the region of La Entrada. The inscriptions on Stelae I and 4 at Copán record a possible "predynastic" ruler

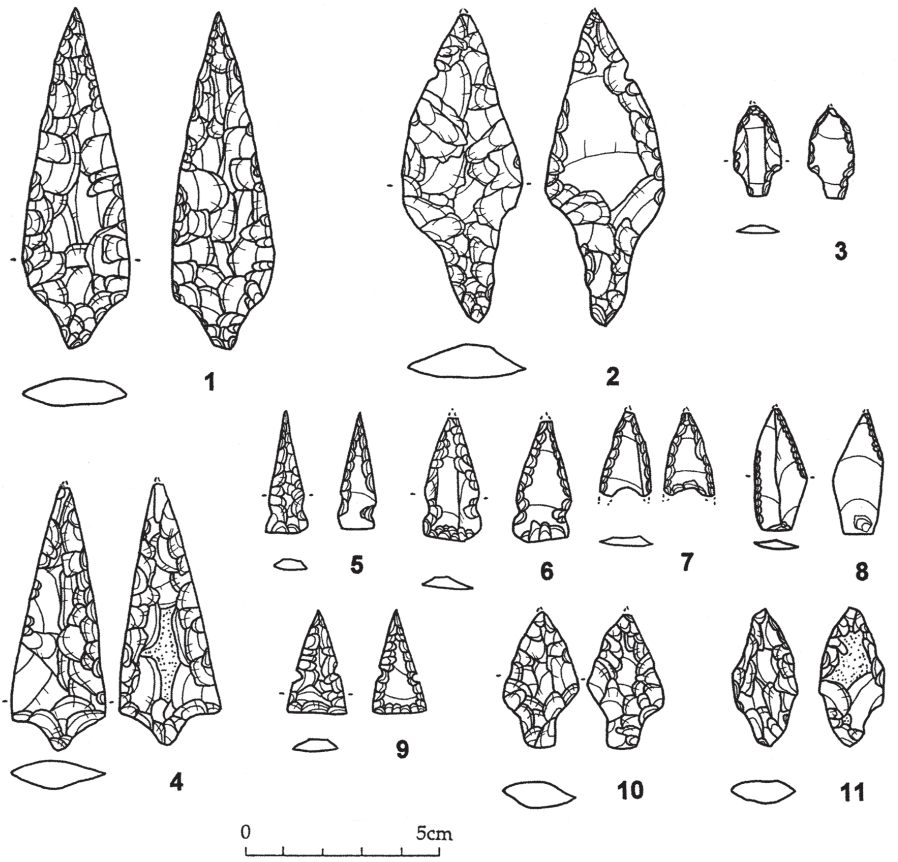

Figure 5.3. Obsidian and chert points from the Copán region, Honduras: Two (1 and 4) were manufactured from chert; one (3) was from Pachuca green obsidian; and one (11) was from La Esperanza obsidian while the others were manufactured from Ixtepeque obsidian. (1) Protoclassic period; (2–3) Early Classic period; and (4–11) Late and Terminal Classic periods. Five (1, 2, 4, 10, 11) were bifacial points, and six(3, 5–9) were prismatic blade points. Note projectile impact damage on numbers 2–4, 6–8, and 10. Drawings are in Japanese technical style. Each illustration shows the sequence of flake scar detachment. Flake scars, fissures, and ripple marks demonstrate the relationships of adjacent flake scars.

and an event that took place in 159 CE that may have to do with the founding of Copán's kingdom (Stuart 1992:171). It is noteworthy that no evidence has been found for the production and use of bifacial points in the Preclassic contexts. If this pattern is not due to sampling errors, warfare may have played some role in the rise of complex societies in these regions.

A royal dynasty was founded on 8.19.10.10.17 (426 CE) by K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', and a new royal center was established in a thoroughly indefensible

place, in the center of the valley bottomlands; this royal line was to persist until the death of the sixteenth ruler, Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat (763–820) in 820 CE (Fash 2001). Although nearly all obsidian continued to be procured from Ixtepeque, as in the Preclassic and Protoclassic periods, this foreign ruler may have started to obtain small numbers of finished artifacts—primarily prismatic blades, but also small quantities of bifacial atlatl (spearthrower) dart points and prismatic blade points—from central Mexico, including green obsidian from the Pachuca source (Aoyama 2001:352). The spatial distribution of green obsidian bifacial points was more restricted than that of green obsidian prismatic blades in the Copán Valley, indicating higher exchange value of bifacial points than prismatic blades. All green obsidian bifacial points were recovered exclusively from the Principal Group and its adjacent areas in the Bosque ward of the urban core. A green obsidian prismatic blade point was collected in the Las Sepulturas ward of the urban core (Figure 5.3). The form of this green obsidian prismatic point is different from that of Ixtepeque obsidian specimens. Although retouching was performed bifacially only along the sides, as was done for Ixtepeque obsidian prismatic blade points, the green obsidian prismatic blade point had a stem, indicating that it was attached to the end of thin shaft. Although no microwear was detected because of severe postdepositional surface modifications, the green obsidian prismatic blade point may have been used as arrow point.

At the beginning of the Early Classic period, the Copán Valley hilltop site of Cerro de las Mesas was founded 2 km northwest of the Principal Group (Fash 2001:89). It is important to note that the percentage of Pachuca green obsidian tools among all obsidian chipped stone artifacts at Cerro de las Mesas (6.7%) is the second highest in the Early Classic Copán Valley (indicating its possible ties with central Mexico), only after that for the Yax Structure (9.8%) in the Principal Group of Copán, which K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' commissioned (Aoyama 1999:105). The prevalence of artifacts made from central Mexican obsidian is possibly attributable to the presence of foreigners with access to Pachuca obsidian; it could also have been an outcome of marriage alliances that entailed tribute from central Mexico; or it could mean that trade connections in general had opened up (Aoyama and Graham 2015:9).

William Fash and Barbara Fash (2000:447–448) speculate that K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' and his followers established themselves at the fortress-like center of Cerro de las Mesas and unified the diverse, competing noble lines. Then the Principal Group was established in the center of the Copán Valley. Other Early Classic hilltop sites in the Copán region include Group 9 (where the modern town of Copán Ruinas stands), the site of Cerro Chino, and the

Figure 5.4. The depiction of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' as a warrior portrayed on the front of Altar Q (second from the left; photograph by Kazuo Aoyama).

site of Los Achiotes. None of the last three hilltop sites mentioned have Late Classic occupations of any magnitude. This hilltop settlement pattern is in striking contrast to Late Classic practice, in which the vast majority of the settlements were on or very near the alluvial bottomlands. Moreover, it has been suggested that the severe parry fracture of the right forearm of the man in the Hunal tomb might be a battle wound. This is consistent with the depiction of K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' as a warrior portrayed on the front of Altar Q (Figure 5.4), in which he is depicted holding a small rectangular shield protecting his right forearm (Sharer 2003:151–152).

There was a marked increase in the production of bifacial points made from Ixtepeque obsidian during the Early Classic period; most points were used in lances, but some were atlatl darts. In particular, the percentage of bifacial points among all Early Classic obsidian artifacts at the hilltop fortified center of Cerro de las Mesas in the Copán Valley (4.4%) is considerably higher than the mean percentage of obsidian bifacial points in the Copán Valley (0.4%, S.D. = 0.9). The unusually high percentage of bifacial points in obsidian artifacts, along with other lines of evidence such as iconography, fortifications, and paleopathology, might indicate that intra- or intervalley conflict may have been critical in the development of complex society in the Copán Valley during the Early Classic period. Importantly, such warfare was

not caused by demographic and ecological pressures and did have fundamental effects on the society.

Local production of obsidian prismatic blade points began in the Copán Valley during the Early Classic period, albeit in small quantities. These prismatic blade points were manufactured from Ixtepeque obsidian prismatic blade blanks. They had straight and unthinned bases and were not side-notched. Based on contextual and microwear data, these prismatic blades points could have been used as arrow points. Moreover, it should be emphasized that not all hafted tools were side-notched (e.g., Keeley 1982). If, for battles, the object was to leave the point behind, then a warrior may not have wished to produce a finely chipped arrowhead. The Principal Group of Copán was an important center of part-time production of both utilitarian and luxury goods during the Classic period. The production of bifacial points made from Ixtepeque obsidian was organized as a part-time household activity in Group 10L-17, a possible residence of elite warrior/bifacial production knapper, only 60 m west of the Principal Group in the El Bosque ward of the urban core.

During the eighth century, there were 20,000 inhabitants in the Copán Valley, clearly showing demographic and agricultural pressure (Fash 2001:154). During the Late Classic period (600–850 CE) in the Copán Valley, moreover, both side-notched and unnotched prismatic blade points were manufactured from Ixtepeque obsidian. The results of microwear analysis indicate that most of them were used as arrow points. The present chipped stone data in the Copán Valley do not indicate a sudden increase in obsidian or chert weapons during or immediately after the reign of Ruler 13, Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil (695–738 CE). The lithic data may support David Webster's (1993:431–432) contention that the capture and decapitation of this ruler by K'ahk' Tiliiw Chan Yopaat of Quirigua in 738 CE was simply an elite coup. Alternatively, the dynastic conflict may have taken place in areas outside of major settlements.

The production of Ixtepeque obsidian bifacial points and prismatic blade points appears to have increased toward the end of the Late Classic period. Chipped stone evidence indicates that either conflict between the dynasty and local noble lines, or intervalley conflict, or a combination of both may have played a significant role in the political collapse of centralized dynastic rule at Copán. The percentages of bifacial points and prismatic blades in obsidian artifacts recovered from the final phase occupation debris left behind in the early ninth century at the Acropolis in the Principal Group are even higher than that of the Early Classic hilltop center of Cerro de las Mesas

(4.4%) and that of the Late Classic fortified center of Aguateca (5.5%), mentioned above. Especially, there is an extremely high percentage of bifacial points (7.5%, all manufactured from Ixtepeque obsidian) in a total of 440 obsidian artifacts from Structures 10L-26–1st and the temple annex attached to its south side (Structure 10L-230) at the Acropolis. Also, the percentage of Ixtepeque obsidian prismatic blade points is 1.1%, well above the mean percentage of prismatic blade points in obsidian artifacts in the Late Classic Copán Valley (0.09%, S.D. = 0.5). Moreover, the percentage of bifacial points (17.9%) in a total of 112 obsidian artifacts from Structure 10L-22A at the Acropolis, which Barbara Fash and colleagues (1992) have interpreted as a Classic Maya *popol nah* (council house), is unusually high. These artifacts were uncovered in final phase occupation debris laid down in the early ninth century. The unusual high percentages of bifacial points are not only well above the mean percentage of obsidian bifacial points in the Copán Valley during the Late Classic period (0.9%, S.D. = 3.5) but also even higher than that of the Early Classic hilltop fortified center of Cerro de las Mesas in the same valley and that of eight extensively excavated structures in the epicenter of Aguateca.

The chipped stone data are in accordance with the mosaic facade stone sculptures that decorated Structures 10L-26–1st and the annex building of Structure 10L-230, which were related to warfare and sacrifice (Fash 1992). Rulers seated on the Hieroglyphic Stairway of Structures 10L-26–1st were dressed as warriors carrying shields. In addition, Structure 10L-230 was decorated with stone sculptures of more than 100 fleshless human long bones and numerous skulls. The chipped stone data are consistent with the evidence of the violent destruction of several buildings of central Copán, such as Structure 10L-22, Structure 10L-22A (Fash et al. 1992:427), two of the vaulted buildings on Plaza A, and probably one on Plaza B of the royal palace of Group 10L-2 (Andrews and Fash 1992) in the Principal Group as well as Structure 9N-82 of Group 9N-8 in the Las Sepulturas ward of the urban core, a residence of Mak'an Chanal, who was an elite scribe and high-ranking official *ajk'uhuun* in the court of Ruler 16, Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat (763–820) (Jackson 2013:25–28; Webster et al. 1986:190). In sum, the unusually high concentrations of obsidian bifacial points and prismatic blade points in the final phase occupation layers in the central part of Copán in the early ninth century, along with other lines of evidence for warfare, such as stone sculptures of warriors and central Copán building destruction, indicate that warfare—and possibly warfare of a new kind—gained acceptance and was among the several causes that brought about the political collapse of

centralized dynastic rule. The fall of Copán dynasty constitutes a part of the second wave of political collapse in lowland Classic Maya society (Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume).

During the Early Postclassic period (950–1050 CE), there were radical changes in obsidian exchange, chipped stone production, and tool use in the Copán Valley (Aoyama 1999:187–195). First, the procurement and intraregional exchange system of Ixtepeque obsidian blade cores broke down, resulting in a concomitant decline in prismatic blade production in the Copán Valley. Second, the Early Postclassic inhabitants imported small quantities of central Mexican obsidian prismatic blades with ground platforms from Pachuca and Ucareo. Third, and more importantly, both obsidian and chert bifacial points were manufactured and used intensively in domestic contexts. In fact, the total number of obsidian (N = 72) and chert (N = 27) bifacial points recovered from the complete excavation of a single Early Postclassic residence (Structure 11L-77) at Copán exceeds that of any residential structures at Aguateca. A relatively high percentage of bifacial thinning flakes in the chipped stone artifacts indicates on-site production of both obsidian and chert bifacial points at the household level (Aoyama 1999:Tables 9.1, 9.2). Greater reliance on local chert for bifacial point production, in comparison to the Late Classic period, may indicate the craftsmen trying to overcome a scarcity of suitable obsidian blanks for bifacial points. The great amount of bifacial points at Structure 11L-77, combined with the evidence of violent destruction of its superstructure by fire (Manahan 2003), suggests that warfare was among the several causes that led to the demographic "collapse" of Copán, through both death and out-migration. In sum, warfare may have played a more important role in the political development and collapse in the Copán Valley than previously believed.

Ceibal and Its Surrounding Areas

The Lowland Maya city of Ceibal was strategically located on hills that form a limestone escarpment that rises 100 m above the Pasión River and constitute the highest terrain above its course throughout the Peten lowlands. Of all Pasión drainage sites, Ceibal is the largest both in terms of extent and in terms of the total construction volume of its major public structures. There are three main groups of structures—Groups A, C, and D, on three hilltops—in the central part of Ceibal, with public structures covering an area of about 1 km^2. Harvard University carried out intensive and extensive excavations from 1964 through 1968 in the central part of Ceibal and elsewhere at

the site, which provided basic ceramic chronology (Sabloff 1975; Smith 1982; Tourtellot 1988; Willey 1978, 1990).

Since 2005 the members of the Ceibal-Petexbatun Archaeological Project have uncovered substantial construction activities in the early stages of human settlement in Ceibal, especially during the Middle Preclassic period (1000–350 BCE), which the Ceibal Project of Harvard University did not bring to light (Inomata et al. 2013). During the early Middle Preclassic Real-Xe phase (1000–700 BCE), the site's first pyramid-platform and public plaza were constructed. In the subsequent late Middle Preclassic Escoba-Mamom phase (700–350 BCE), Ceibal then became an important center with numerous pyramid-platform constructions and a local population that increased steadily. Ceibal reached its first peak through the Late Preclassic Cantutse-Chicanel phase (350–75 BCE). The first signs of social problems at Ceibal emerged at the beginning of the Terminal Preclassic Xate phase (75 BCE–175 CE). The population of Ceibal declined significantly from the Cantutse phase to the Xate phase. An important change during this period was the establishment of Group D on a defensible hill surrounded by steep gullies and an escarpment (Inomata et al. 2017:1294). It is likely that the decline of Ceibal around 75 BCE was related to the intensification of warfare in the region.

An early Ceibal ruler, K'an Mo' Bahlam (floruit 415 CE), was mentioned in a retrospective text, but Ceibal was occupied in only a very minor way in the latter part of the Early Classic period (175–600 CE). After this there was strong revival in both the central part and the peripheries of Ceibal during the Late Classic period (600–810 CE). However, the Ceibal ruler Yich'aak Bahlam was captured by Ruler 3 of the nearby Dos Pilas / Aguateca dynasty in 735 CE, and Ceibal was politically subordinate to the Dos Pilas / Aguateca dynasty at least for a time (Mathews and Willey 1991:50). After the fall of Dos Pilas in 761 CE, a new ruler, Ajaw Bot, governed Ceibal. His reign ended abruptly around 810 CE, and his palace in Group D was destroyed violently (Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume). The end of his reign at Ceibal represents the second wave of political collapse. A new king, probably called Aj Bolon Ha'btal Wat'ul K'atel, came to Ceibal in 829 CE. He erected spectacular stelae, including those associated with a calendric ceremony held in 849 CE, a time when many other cities in the southern Maya Lowlands were in decline (Martin and Grube 2008). The Ceibal dynasty ended after the last recorded date of 889 CE in the third wave of political collapse (Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume). The process of abandonment as a major city occurred after the political collapse.

The Ceibal-Petexbatun Archaeological Project has collected significantly more lithic artifacts (N = 86,624) than the Ceibal Project of Harvard University (N = 3,327), primarily because the excavated soil was screened through 1/4 mesh, unlike earlier field methodologies (Willey 1978:124). Notably, the Ceibal-Petexbatun Archaeological Project has collected 37,116 chipped stone artifacts from unmixed Preclassic contexts, including 30,500 artifacts from the Middle Preclassic contexts. In fact, the Middle Preclassic lithic artifacts from Ceibal make up the largest sample of this critical period in the Maya Lowlands to date.

The Ceibal-Petexbatun Archaeological Project has recovered a total of 139 chert points and 12 obsidian points from primary and secondary contexts of all time periods (Table 5.1) while the Ceibal Project of Harvard University uncovered 77 chert bifacial points and 11 obsidian points from all time periods (Willey 1978:102, 124). In contrast, the greater number of chert bifacial points (N = 437 of which 429 pertain to the Late Classic period) were recovered from the Aguateca region (of which 308 came from the rapidly abandoned city of Aguateca and dated to the Late Classic period) while other possible chipped stone weapons from Aguateca include 2 obsidian bifacial points, 27 obsidian prismatic blades and 4 chert small unifacial points (Aoyama 2009b:280). This large quantity of bifacial points is indicative of the escalating warfare at Aguateca in the eighth and early ninth century and its rapid abandonment.

Spear/lance points were chipped stone weapons among the Preclassic Maya at Ceibal. Two chert bifacial points and a shell ornament representing a decapitated human head (Inomata et al. 2017:225), both recovered from the Central Plaza of Ceibal and dated to the early Middle Preclassic period (1000–700 BCE), are the earliest evidence of warfare in the Maya Lowlands to date. A stemmed unifacial point shaped from a crested blade as well as a stemmed unifacial point made on a small percussion blade blank were recovered from the central part of Ceibal and dated to the late Middle Preclassic period (700–350 BCE). These points are the earliest points made from San Martín Jilotepeque obsidian in Ceibal. The scarcity of Preclassic lithic points, including during the Terminal Preclassic Xate phase when Group D was established on a defensible hill, suggests that more perishable weapons, such as those of hard wood, may have been used during the Preclassic period than in Late and Terminal Classic periods or that human conflict probably took place in areas outside of major settlements (Table 5.1).

Notably, all chipped stone points pertaining to from the Middle Preclassic to Early Classic periods were found in the central part of Ceibal but none

Table 5.1. Pointed chipped stone tools from Ceibal, Guatemala

	Obsidian			Chert			
	primary contexts	secondary contexts	subtotal	primary contexts	secondary contexts	subtotal	Total
Early Middle Preclassic	0	0	0	2	0	2	2
Late Middle Preclassic	1	1	2	2	0	2	4
Late Preclassic	0	0	0	0	4	4	4
Terminal Preclassic	0	0	0	1	2	3	3
Early Classic	0	2	2	0	2	2	4
Late Classic	0	3	3	3	59	62	65
Terminal Classic	3	2	5	6	58	64	69
Total	4	8	12	14	125	139	151

from the peripheral areas. A small medial fragment of bifacial point made of the green obsidian from the Pachuca source, Central Mexico, was found in an Early Classic secondary deposit of Structure A-2, a large platform of 55 × 45 m located on the south side of the South Plaza of Group A. Another obsidian bifacial point made of San Martín Jilotepeque obsidian was from the secondary context of the Early Classic period in the central part of Ceibal. No chert bifacial points were recovered from the primary context of the Early Classic period, and only two bifacial points were from the secondary context. The rarity of chert bifacial points, combined with the lack of evidence of violent destruction of public structures in Ceibal, suggests that warfare may not have been at the root of several of the causes that led to the origin of the Ceibal dynasty and demographic decline during the Early Classic period. Alternatively, human conflict may have taken place in areas outside of major settlements.

In contrast to the virtual absence of bifacial and unifacial points in the peripheral areas of Ceibal (3.3%, $N = 2$), it should be noted that the great majority of chert bifacial points (96.7%, $N = 58$) in the present Ceibal sample—all obsidian bifacial points and prismatic blade points as well as all small unifacial points made of chert—were recovered from primary and secondary contexts of the Late Classic period (600–810 CE) in the central part of Ceibal, indicating that they were primarily weapons. Nevertheless, some of them may have been also used in hunting. Although this pattern may result from sampling error, it is significant that there is no evidence for the production or use of obsidian or chert bifacial points, small unifacial points, or obsidian prismatic blade points at nearby minor centers, such as Caobal (Aoyama and

Figure 5.5. Excavations of the Terminal Classic royal palace at Ceibal (Photograph by Kazuo Aoyama).

Munson 2012:40), La Felicidad, and El Edén. Stela 2 of Aguateca portrays Ruler 3 of the Dos Pilas / Aguateca dynasty as a warrior, standing over the captured ruler of neighboring Ceibal, Yich'aak Bahlam, in 735 CE(Graham 1967:Figure 5; Martin and Grube 2008:61). The lithic data do suggest the intensification of warfare in Ceibal during Late Classic period.

The production of obsidian and chert bifacial points increased considerably in the southeastern and central-western Peten region during the Terminal Classic period (A. 810–950) at such major centers as Ixtonton, Calzada Mopan, El Chal, and Machaquila (Aoyama and Laporte 2010:12). The fall of the Ceibal dynasty was marked by the destruction of its royal palace (Figure 5.5) and temple pyramid (Houston and Inomata 2009:309). Stucco sculptures of human figures that decorated the royal palace were intentionally beheaded. Possible chert pointed weapons, in addition to six bifacial points from primary contexts, include 58 bifacial points recovered from secondary contexts of the Terminal Classic period. Virtually all points were found in the central part of Ceibal (93.8%, $N = 60$), but only four points (6.2%) from the peripheral areas coincide with escalating warfare and violence in the region. For the first time, obsidian side-notched stemmed points made on prismatic blade appear from secondary context of the Terminal Classic period. The arrow points were not recovered in the peripheral areas of Ceibal but were found exclusively in the central part of Ceibal, indicating that they

were primarily weapons, although some of them may have been also used in hunting. In sum, there is increasing evidence of the production and use of chert and obsidian bifacial points, chert small unifacial points, and obsidian prismatic blade points in the central part of Ceibal during the Late and Terminal Classic periods, as there are compelling epigraphic and archaeological evidence for warfare in the Petexbatun and Pasión regions (Inomata 1997; Inomata and Triadan 2010; Martin and Grube 2008:61; Mathews and Willey 1991). Lithic data do point toward direct involvement of elite residents in the epicenter of Ceibal in such warfare. The artifact changes almost certainly are tied to changes in the practice of warfare in these regions (Aoyama and Graham 2015). Although the spear or dart points were predominant weapons in Classic Maya warfare, the increase in both chert small unifacial points and obsidian prismatic blade points in Ceibal heralds bow-and-arrow technology during the Late and Terminal Classic periods.

Conclusions

The spear/lance points were major chipped stone weapons among the Preclassic Maya. The adaption of the atlatl darts from highland Central Mexico in the Early Classic seems to represent the first significant change in Maya warfare but did not replace handheld spears as a predominant weapon in the Maya Lowlands. Throughout most of Maya Classic history, lance points and to a smaller extent dart points were more important than the bow and arrow in Maya warfare. Both notched and unnotched obsidian prismatic blade points were present in the Copán Valley during the Early and Late Classic periods as well as at Aguateca and Ceibal during the Late Classic period. The results of high-power microwear analysis indicate that these points were mainly used as arrowheads. The bow and arrow were present in Maya Lowlands earlier than has been previously suggested. The increase in the production and use of atlatl darts as well as bows and arrows by the Terminal Classic period may signal a change in the practice of warfare.

Warfare may have played an important role in the development of complex society in the Copán Valley during the Early Classic period. The results of present study suggest that warfare may have played a more important role in the Classic Maya political collapse in the study regions than previously believed. There is increasing evidence of the production and use of chert and obsidian points in the central part of Copán, Aguateca, and Ceibal during the Late and Terminal Classic periods, indicating elites' direct involvement in warfare. The demise of Classic Maya dynasties at Copán, Aguateca, and

Ceibal were associated with warfare and violence. Several major buildings of the central part of these cities were destroyed at the end of the Late Classic period or during the Terminal Classic period, which suggests that human conflict did take place in the epicenters rather than in areas outside of major settlements. After epicentral destructions of these cities, dynastic rule never recovered from political collapse and monumentality in civil-religious architecture (Arnauld, Chapter 8, this volume) as well as inscriptions disappeared, pointing to deeper change in the rules of war engagement. Therefore, the aim of the invading enemy or rival group was not to conquer or subjugate these cities but to terminate their dynasties as a political and economic power.

Divine or sacred kingship corresponds to a type of governance of society that could be defined as the imbrication of ritual into politics (see Andrieu, Chapter 2, this volume). Does the demise of Classic royal dynasties represent the collapse of sacred or divine kingship (see Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume)? Based on the lithic, epigraphic, iconographic, and other archaeological data, the answer is yes. In contrast to the notable war narratives in the Late Classic Maya texts, after 790 CE the reference to war decreased steadily, and the Terminal Classic texts display a lack of war events (see Grube and Helmke et al., Chapter 7, this volume). However, not only the political collapse of Aguateca and Copán dynasties at the end of the Late Classic period in the early ninth century in the second wave of political collapse but also that of Ceibal dynasty during the Terminal Classic period after 889 CE in the third wave of political collapse were associated with destructive warfare and violence. The emphasis on ritual in the writing and iconography of monuments during the Terminal Classic period (Grube, Chapter 3, this volume) may represent ruler's efforts to revive the system of divine or sacred kingship. I strongly agree with Diane Chase and Arlen Chase(see Chapter 16, this volume) that Classic Maya warfare served for a mechanism for removing divine kings from their previously divine status. As in the case of rulers of Chichen Itza (Cobos, Chapter 15, this volume), the nature of Classic Maya kingship in the southern lowlands changed at the end of the Late Classic period and during the Terminal Classic period, becoming more warrior-ruler but less divine. The chipped stone data, along with other lines of evidence for warfare—including epigraphic, iconographic, and other archaeological evidence such as the violent destruction of several buildings of the central parts of Copán, Aguateca, and Ceibal—indicate that rulers and other elite members, men and possibly some women, were warriors who may have participated in destructive warfare more actively during the Late and Terminal Classic

periods than previous periods, thus pointing one aspect of the transformation of Maya kingship.

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6

From Kings to Nobles

The Political-Historical Context of Naachtun at the End of the Classic Period

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The end of the Late Classic and Terminal Classic periods (750–950/1000 CE) corresponds to moments of strong political changes in the Maya Lowlands, particularly at the level of rulership in the major centers (Demarest et al., eds. 2004; see Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume). It is the moment when sacred kingship, a regime centered on the personification of power in the omnipresent image of the king (Stuart 1996), began to waver. In some places the local sacred rulership system disintegrated, leading generally to the more or less progressive abandonment of the monumental epicenter, as was the case in Uxul, among other cities (Grube 2011). But in other cities, residential areas remained settled long after the demise of the royal dynasty (see Arnauld et al., Chapter 8, this volume; and A. Chase et al., Chapter 19, this volume, for more examples). Still in other cases the Terminal Classic period corresponds to a newfound vitality for some local royalty who politically and economically emancipated themselves from neighboring major centers that had previously been dominant. Nakum, Yaxhá, and Xunantunich took advantage of the fall of larger centers, such as Tikal and Naranjo among others, on a regional scale (LeCount et al. 2002; Źrałka 2008:198; see also Helmke et al., Chapter 7, this volume; Źrałka et al., Chapter 12, this volume). These different contexts also show how the sacred kingship regime was challenged by subroyal elites and nobles at the end of the Classic period and how the relation between both partners changed, an aspect particularly clear in the El Palmar context (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín, Chapter 11, this volume). In northern Peten the Naachtun case follows the same trend; it expresses

the political and economic process of transformation at the end of the Late Classic period from a "Classic" rulership system focused on the king's image and challenged by powerful local elites into a non-royal system controlled by noble families, as observed elsewhere in the Maya area (e.g. in the Río Bec region, Nondédéo, Arnauld, and Michelet 2013, or in some parts of the Puuc region, Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume). However, the Naachtun context illustrates a singular case study, especially as the significant political change seemingly developed in three phases—the split and departure of a branch of the royal family and its installation in other cities, the weakening of the branch that remained in Naachtun, and the gradual takeover by local noble families that replaced the royal elites and carried out a social, economic, and political reorganization of the city. All this opened a new period of relative economic prosperity for this regional center based on active participation in long-distance exchange networks, although this relative prosperity was of short duration (roughly 100–150 years).

After briefly narrating the relations Naachtun maintained with major centers and after mentioning key moments in the history of its local dynasty, we present our model of the three transformative phases developed during the eighth and ninth centuries. The impact of economic factors on the changes in the Naachtun governance will also be addressed. The interdependence of Maya sites economies has long been seen as a key point for the understanding of global changes in the Maya area during the Late and Terminal Classic periods (e.g., A. Chase et al., Chapter 19, this volume; Demarest et al., Chapter 18, this volume).

Background

We now know that Naachtun was founded circa 150 CE (Hiquet 2020; Patiño Contreras 2013). The site experienced growth after the installation of the royal Bat dynasty (Nondédéo, Lacadena García-Gallo, and Cases Martín 2019). While direct epigraphic evidence of the first mention of a Suutz' *ajaw* (Bat dynasty) at the site dates back to 361 CE, the installation of the royal dynasty probably occurred a little earlier, in the first quarter of the fourth century, as indicated by a very large Distance Number recorded on Stela 2 dedicated in 642 CE (Figure 6.1) to commemorate the 9.10.10.0.0 half *katun* (Nondédéo 2016; Nondédéo, Lacadena García-Gallo, and Garay 2019). Although the long text located on the back side of the stela is eroded, this early reference to an event that occurred between 300 and 325 CE could allude to the local founder of the Suutz' dynasty, whose name is unknown (Lacadena

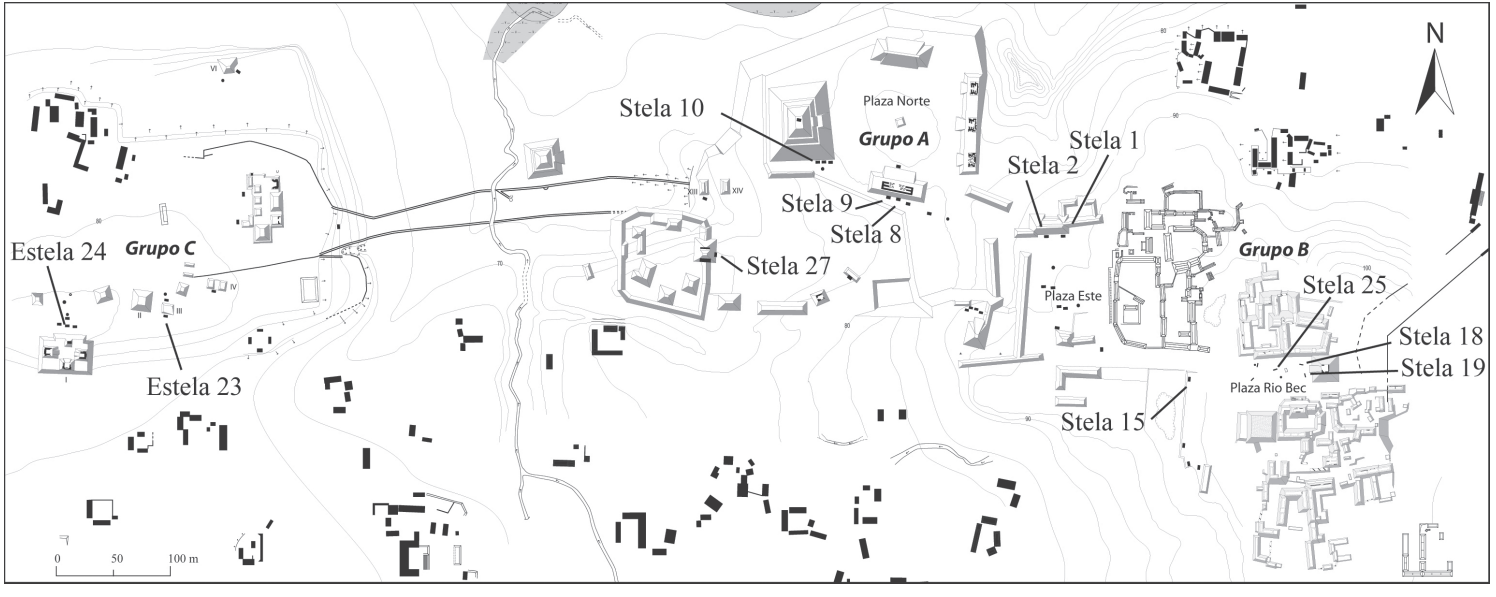

Figure 6.1. Map of the Naachtun epicenter showing the location of the stelae and buildings mentioned in the chapter (after Lemonnier and Cotom Nimatuj 2016; Morton 2007; Ruppert and Denison 1943).

García-Gallo, personal communication 2015; see similar texts on Naranjo Altar 1 or the Temple of the Inscriptions Panel at Palenque).

The political apogee of the site thus began by 300 CE and continued through the fourth and fifth centuries (ceramic subphases Balam II and III: 300–550 CE) when Naachtun became a regional power as a result of its active participation in the "Entrada" events of 378 CE and the alliance that was established with the new Teotihuacan rulers of Tikal (Nondédéo et al. 2016; Nondédéo, Lacadena García-Gallo, and Cases Martín 2019). Following these events, the rulers of Naachtun, previously designated simply as *ajaw* (without the *k'uhul* prefix; e.g., Stela 23 dedicated in 361 CE), climbed the hierarchy as a regional power and became a few decades later *k'uhul ajaw* (on Stela 24, dedicated between 380 and 400 CE on the basis of its paleography). By 411 CE the Bat dynasty was mentioned as a foreign power ("overlord") in Calakmul on Stela 114 dedicated in 435 CE, the earliest stela found in this major center to date (Grube 2005; Martin 2005; Valencia Rivera and Esparza Olguín 2014; Vázquez López et al. 2016). Knowing that the seat of the Bat political entity then was Naachtun, this city dominated the Calakmul local dynasty—the Chatahn Winik lineage—at least for some decades prior to their eviction by 514 CE (García Barrios and Velásquez 2016; Valencia Rivera and Esparza Olguín 2014; Vázquez López et al. 2016). The role of the Naachtun Suutz' dynasty in this part of northern Peten and southern Campeche would have been strong during the fifth century based on a series of early stelae found in the vicinity of Naachtun, especially in Candzibaantún, with dates of 8.18.0.0.0 (396 CE), and in Balakbal, with a date of 8.18.10.0.0 (406 CE; Grube 2008:182–187). We can plausibly consider that the Naachtun-Bat dynasty was involved in some ways in the installation of local rulers and that they may have controlled this region in the name and as an emissary of Tikal, taking advantage of its steady alliance with the sovereigns of the New Order (Stuart 2000).

Lasting about two centuries, this early rise is expressed through numerous public and monumental constructions in the city center (Triadic complex, funerary Acropolis V, La Perdida pyramid, E-Group complex, large public plazas, ballcourt, reservoirs, and palatial complex; Hiquet et al. 2017) and also reflected by an initial demographic peak in the surrounding residential areas based on a population increase and strong construction activity; 49% of the patio groups tested in those areas were occupied, and possibly up to 75% if mixed Early Classic lots are taken into account; Chronophage software treatment of the data indicates that 64% of the patio groups may have been occupied (Desachy 2018; see also Hiquet 2020).[1] However, the situation

seems to change during the sixth century CE, when the site gradually lost its dynamism and when far fewer public constructions were undertaken, even though there was still some activity in the residential areas. This may be partly related to the loss of Tikal's influence, the disappearance of Teotihuacán from the Mesoamerican landscape, and the inexorable rise of the Kaanul dynasty in the region by 520–560 CE. This rise was accomplished through an active policy of matrimonial alliances and wars that dated back to 520 CE in places like La Corona or El Peru (Martin 2008; Pérez et al. 2014; Stuart et al. 2014). The cleverly conceived political strategy of progressively dismantling Tikal's historic hegemonic power would later reach sites such as El Zotz, Holmul, Caracol, and Naranjo and would culminate in 562 CE with the defeat of Tikal, Naachtun's firm ally, presumably at the hands of Sky Witness of Dzibanche (Estrada-Belli and Tokovinine 2016; Martin and Beliaev 2017; Martin and Grube 2008).

The Late Classic Context

In Naachtun the beginning of the Late Classic period is characterized by the construction of a new main plaza, the East Plaza of Group B (Figure 6.2). It represents the city's new seat of power, spatially breaking with the previous ones—Group C with Acropolis V and the triadic complex; Group A with E-Group, the main West Plaza, and the walled complex. The new East Plaza and its public buildings, together with its associated palatial compound, the Western Complex of Group B, symbolize the new political epicenter founded by the late sixth century and early seventh century, as indicated by the dedication dates of Stelae 1 and 2, respectively 9.9.10.0.0 and 9.10.10.0.0 (623–642 CE), erected in front of the main 5O-5 building north of the Plaza. Unfortunately, despite the long text present on the back of Stela 2, it has not yet been possible to identify an emblem glyph associated with the name of the individual on that monument, a certain Sak Tz'ikin (Nondédéo, Lacadena García-Gallo, and Garay 2019).

A recently discovered mention of the Bat emblem glyph from a contemporary context at the neighboring site of Uxul could help in clarifying the Naachtun political context vis-à-vis the Kaanul dynasty. In a rather murky context on Uxul Stela 3, dedicated in 632 CE (9.9.19.15.0), the Bat emblem glyph appears associated with the title of *kalo'mte'* (Grube and Paap 2008). According to Nikolai Grube (personal communication 2018), the stela mentions two characters, one with the local toponym of Uxul and the other with the Bat emblem glyph separated by a partly eroded glyph, which Grube

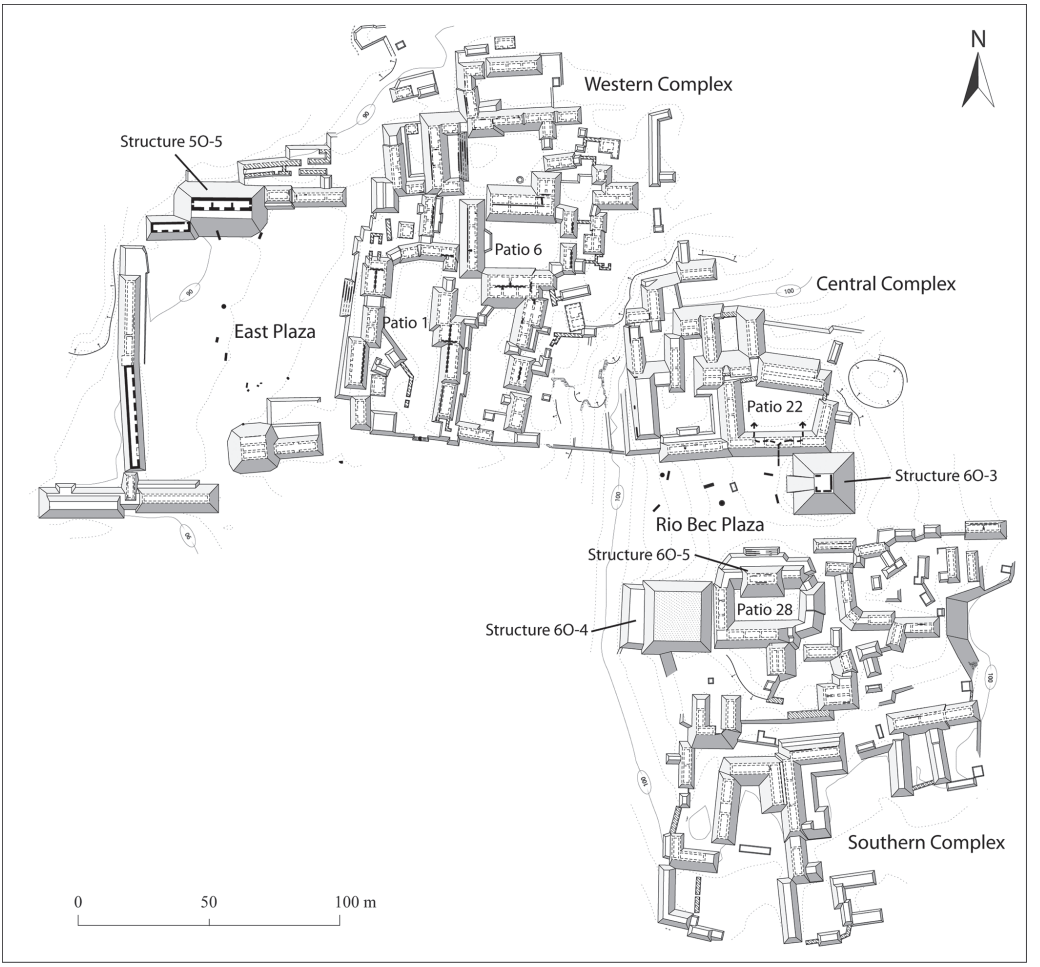

Figure 6.2. Map of Naachtun Group B (after Gillot and Michelet 2014).

believes may read "*ya*" and could well be part of the expression *u-yajaw* ("the *ajaw* of"), a clear expression of subordination. This would signify that during the early Late Classic period, Uxul was under Naachtun's political yoke. This statement would have preceded the takeover of Uxul by the Kaanul dynasty a few years later (Grube, personal communication 2018) and indicates that Naachtun was independent at that time. On Uxul Stela 17 there is also a mention of the Bat emblem glyph; this is an Early Classic monument reused and recarved in the Late Classic period (Grube 2011; Grube and Paap 2009). It should also be noted, after Carlos Pallán Gayol and Nikolai Grube (2009), that these two monuments, Stelae 3 and 17, are located in Uxul Groups A

and M, two older monumental groups of Uxul local dynasty—and distinct from Group K where the headquarters of the Kaanul dynasty was established shortly afterward. This epigraphic evidence and the location of these monuments in the older Uxul groups suggest continuity in the local seats of power of Uxul—even under the Bat rule—before the Kaanul period and the construction of Group K. This likely suggests that Bat dynasty had a local foothold or maintained a strong alliance with the Uxul ruling elite.

The relations between Uxul and Naachtun at that time may be conceived either as multiple seats for the Suutz' dynasty through a split of the Naachtun royal family or as, proposed above, the vassalage of Uxul under Naachtun. Another issue is to what extent a site like Naachtun, just 30 km south of Calakmul, could have been independent from the Kaanul hegemony in the years 620–640 CE, when it is known that more distant major centers such as Palenque, Naranjo, Caracol, El Peru, or La Corona (to mention but a few sites) had already fallen into the Kaanul sphere or had suffered military attacks. In addition, it is worth remembering the presence in Calakmul of the Kaanul dynasty from at least 630 CE (Valencia Rivera and Esparza Olguín 2014) as well as the enthronement date in 636 CE of Yuhkno'm Ch'een II, six years before the dedication of Stela 2 in the East Plaza of Naachtun. The apparent absence of a reference to any Kaanul emblem glyph on Stela 2 (although quite eroded) and the local style of the adjacent Stela 1 (Julie Patrois, personal communication 2016)—a monument that is dated to 623 CE and that differs from the "imperial style" observed a few years later in Uxul or La Corona (Grube 2011)—could suggest that Naachtun had not yet fallen under Kaanul rule, unlike many other southern lowlands cities. However, it may have been only for a matter of years, especially since a possible hiatus is observed in the Naachtun corpus of inscriptions from 9.10.10.0.0 to 9.15.0.0.0, that could have been caused by Calakmul's taking control of the city (Nondédéo 2011); however, the interpretation of a hiatus may be problematic in view of the few legible inscriptions and the eroded state of the monuments. Yet three kinds of evidence suggest that the Kaanul's hold on Naachtun was not well accepted by the local ruling elite.

(1) In Naachtun we have yet to detect the presence of buildings with a hieroglyphic staircase, which generally indicates close relations with the Kaanul dynasty, the expression of its power, and a strong integration of the city within its hegemonic system (Canuto and Barrientos 2011; Grube 2011).

(2) Later intentional destruction of Naachtun's monuments related to the time of possible Kaanul domination is illustrated by Stela 27, which was broken and placed below a stucco layer in the stairway leading to the Walled

Complex in Group A (Arredondo Leiva 2010). This monument likely portrays a Kaanul princess dressed in a typical latticework *huipil* (García Barrios and Vázquez López 2012). This intentional destruction and burial suggest that integration with the Kaanul kingdom may have not been fully accepted by Naachtun and sharply differs from the model of strong political integration perceptible in Uxul and La Corona (Canuto and Barrientos 2011; Grube 2011; Nondédéo, Lacadena García-Gallo, and Garay 2019).

(3) The only evidence for linkages in the material culture of Naachtun with the Kaanul dynasty derives from the presence of a few codex-style vessel sherds produced in the El Mirador region or in Calakmul itself that are closely related to Kaanul sociopolitical networks (García Barrios 2011; Reents-Budet et al. 2011). Based on iconographic and paste analyses, two specific sherds seem to belong to vessels that can be related to the grave goods found in Calakmul Burial 4 that is attributed to the ruler Yuhkno'm Yich'aak K'ahk' (e.g., Boucher and Palomo 2011; Reents-Budet et al. 2011). However, at Naachtun to date, codex-style sherds have only appeared in fill contexts in different sectors of Group B and are associated with polychrome sherds of the Zacatal and Palmar groups originating from Calakmul (based on pastes; Sion et al. 2017). Recently, in a dense residential area called La Bacinilla, located about 4 km west-southwest of the Naachtun epicenter, several codex-style ceramic sherds were found in the rubble fill of a building bordering the Main Plaza; this is another direct marker of the influence of the Kaanul in Naachtun and its surrounding area.

In any case, the West Complex of Group B likely corresponds to the place of residence or royal palace of the Naachtun elite shortly before and during the Kaanul domination. Although partially occupied during the Early Classic period, this West Complex saw its main architectural development during Ma'ax I (550–650 CE) and Ma'ax II (650–750 CE) times, with most courtyards being built simultaneously with the East Plaza. Patio 6 reflects subtle northern architectural influences (rounded corners with veneer stones and specific construction systems) reminiscent of the Río Bec style, a region close to Calakmul whose style is also represented in the Kaanul capital (Boucher and Palomo 2000:36; Carrasco 2000:17; Nondédéo et al. 2010). In addition, anthracological records demonstrate a differentiated selection of firewood species in Patio 6 that could have resulted from the presence of inhabitants from Calakmul who participated in other traditions of wood collection (Dussol 2017:258–259).

Last, the site demography during Ma'ax I and II times (550–750 CE, the era of the Kaanul domination) is one of a drastic diminution of occupation

Table 6.1. Chart of Naachtun occupation in the epicenter including the surrounding residential areas and based upon 55 tested residential units (after Hiquet 2020)

		Minimal occupation		Probable occupation		Maximal occupation	
Period	Phase	RU	%	RU	%	RU	%
Late Preclassic	Kutz'	6	11	15	27	16	29
	Balam I	22	40	28	51	40	73
Early Classic	Balam II	27	49	35	64	48	87
	Balam III	16	29	31	56	42	76
	Ma'ax I	11	20	24	44	40	73
Late Classic	Ma'ax II	12	22	25	45	40	73
	Ma'ax III	32	58	39	71	46	84
Terminal Classic	Muuch	27	49	38	69	50	91

RU = Residential unit

"Minimal occupation" corresponds to the occupation resulting from the field data (excluding layers poorly dated). "Probable occupation" includes the poorly dated layers through a statistical process of the probability that a portion of such layers belong to a given subphase (Desachy 2018). "Maximal occupation" expresses the highest number of possible occupations for a given subphase, according to the stratigraphic logic.

in the residential areas (excluding Group B) compared to the end of the Early Classic (Table 6.1). Among the 55 patio groups tested, a minimum of 11 groups (20%) and more likely 24 patio groups (44%) were occupied during Ma'ax I, with almost identical figures for Ma'ax II. While this decrease can be related to the uncertain dating of several contexts, it certainly is in accord with the local dispersed population being clustered and absorbed into the largest units of the residential areas (Hiquet et al. 2020).

The Emancipation

If Pallán Gayol and Grube's (2009) readings of the right side of Calakmul's Stela 51 (based on photographs taken by César Lizardi Ramos and Florencia Müller in 1959) are correct, Kaanul's domination over Naachtun lasted until at least 731 CE and the Katun 9.15.0.0.0, that is shortly before Kaanul's fatal defeat by Tikal in 734 CE. This seems to be indicated by the mention of a scattering ritual performed by Yuhkno'm Took' K'awiil in Suutz', "*tahn Suutz'*," considering here Suutz' as a toponym as well as an emblem glyph. However, the situation regarding the decline of the Kaanul remains unclear for the entire region, especially as Uxul Stela 17, dated 730–750 CE, mentions

a captive associated with the Bat emblem glyph (Grube, personal communication 2018). In any case, this is the time when Naachtun experienced a political emancipation vis-à-vis Calakmul, a new context illustrated by the construction of a new seat of power distinct from the East Plaza—the Río Bec Plaza. With its public buildings, this new plaza was then framed on both its north (Central Complex) and south (South Complex) sides by high-status residential compounds. The new paired Río Bec Plaza-Central and South Complexes epicenter gradually replaced the previous seat of power composed of the paired East Plaza and West Complex—although the latter were not abandoned. On the contrary, in the East Plaza several substantial constructions were added to Structure 5O-5, and the West Complex patios then attained their final form. For instance by 730/750 CE Patio 6 underwent important changes; it lost its administrative functions, becoming limited solely to residential ones (accesses closed, rooms subdivided, and benches added associated with intrusive burials). Simultaneously, the largest compound in the West Complex, Patio 1, was built (Perla-Barrera et al. 2016; Sion and Quiñónez 2016).

From 730 to 750 CE, Patio 6 presented hints of a resumption of strong ties with Tikal, the historical ally of Naachtun (Sion et al. 2017). Local funerary contexts (Burial 92 in particular) included polychrome ceramics of the types Mex Composite and Central Farm Composite produced in the Tikal-Holmul region (Perla-Barrera et al. 2016:294), as shown by Ronald Bishop's paste analyses of these ceramic types (Dorie Reents-Budet, personal communication 2016). The resumption of these southern contacts, specifically with Tikal, is confirmed by a number of distinct funerary contexts: in Unit 5N6, Burial 45 contained one Saxche Orange Polychrome plate of the "Tikal Dancer Plates" type produced between 675 and 800 CE in the Tikal-Uaxactun region (Looper et al. 2009:122; Patiño Contreras 2014:494) and ^{14}C-dated between 650–740 CE (Goudiaby 2018; Goudiaby and Nondédéo 2020); in Río Bec Plaza Str. 6O-3, not only Palmar Orange Polychrome but also Central Farm Composite ceramics were recovered; neutron activation analyses suggest they probably have been produced in the royal workshops of Tikal under Jasaw Chan K'awiil (Walker and Reese-Taylor 2012:60–67). These data from diverse locations in Naachtun locally express both Tikal's renewal and geopolitical recovery.

The construction of the new Río Bec Plaza with its associated elite residences expressed a desire to break with the previous political contexts marked by Kaanul domination and associated with the paired East Plaza–West Complex (see Figure 6.1). This emancipation is perceived through the

dedication of several carved monuments (Stelae 15–19 and two altars) that are mainly concentrated in the new public space. Undoubtedly, the construction of the Río Bec Plaza circa 720–740 CE—with its five stelae dated to 741–751 CE (based on inscriptions and iconographic style), its (funerary?) Pyramid 6O-3, and with Structure 6O-5 as a possible meeting space or audience hall—was the result of some royal initiative and seems to mark a restoration of some genuine power in the city. One should note the willingness to continue using the old Main Plaza of Group A as a place of power by dedicating a series of late stelae, including Stelae 9 and 10 dated to 9.15.10.0.0–9.16.10.0.0 (741–761 CE) and erected to the south of the abandoned E-Group. Some of these post-Kaanul monuments, especially those erected in the Río Bec Plaza, also continued to use the Suutz' emblem glyph that is distinguishable, albeit very damaged, on several stelae (e.g., Stelae 15 and 19, according to Cases). They clearly express the restoration of the local dynasty and, with it, the renewal of exchange networks and a political alliance with Tikal.

Of the two residential complexes that delimit the new Río Bec Plaza, the one on the north side the Central Complex seems to be the most integrated, possibly representing the royal palace of the post-Kaanul dynasty. Patio 22, the main patio group in this complex, is directly connected to the new plaza and its Pyramid 6O-3. Built by 740–760 CE, it is the only compound to have direct access to the Río Bec Plaza by means of a chicane entrance in its south building, which also filtered incoming visitors. A Terminal Classic abandonment ritual deposit (Díaz 2016) within the same Patio 22 yielded sherds belonging to the Cabrito Cream Polychrome type that was produced circa 755 CE at the royal court of Naranjo under the reign of K'ahk' Ukalaw Chan Chaahk (gifts to seal political and marriage alliances), confirming the high status of its occupants (Patiño Contreras 2014).

In contrast, on the south side of the Río Bec Plaza, investigations carried out in the South Complex (Sion 2016) showed that this cluster of residential compounds had a longer architectural development that began around 730 CE and extended into the Terminal Classic period. Organized around Patio 28, this complex later developed to the south with the construction of several new patios. High-status noble families lived in several of these patios, in particular Patio 28, as evidenced both by its well-marked spatial association with public Structures 6O-4 and 6O-5 (on the Plaza south side) and by some of the sculptured stone decorations of the facade of its main buildings. Nonetheless, no elements clearly related to kingship were located during the intensive excavations carried out in Patio 28 (Sion 2016); in particular, no inscriptions were recovered in these investigations.

A Late Process in Three Transformative Phases

We now turn to the precisely dated demographic sequence of Naachtun correlated with the architectural sequence of the Río Bec Plaza and its associated complexes in order to illustrate the last public works and expressions of royal authority at the site and to reconstruct the changes that occurred in the site's rule.

By the second half of the eighth century attempts to remodel the Plaza's public buildings were clearly aborted; this can be seen, in particular, relative to Pyramid 6O-3 whose new levels were not finished and in the high massive Platform 6O-4 whose construction was never completed (the access stairway and upper temple are missing); additionally, Structure 6O-5 suffered a reduction of its entry space, perhaps indicating a change of function (Nondédéo, Patiño et al. 2013). We initially related these events to some early decline in royal power along with a possible decrease in population and available labor force, as indicated by preliminary data obtained from the residential areas. Any population reduction would have been accompanied by a concentration of the remaining population around the Río Bec Plaza and, in particular, in the South Complex, which was very dynamic at that time.

Given the recent epigraphic, settlement pattern, and architectural evidence recovered at Naachtun in the epicenter as well as in residential areas (Cases and Lacadena García-Gallo 2014a, 2014b; Hiquet 2020; Sion 2016), however, the scenario of an early collapse must now be formulated into a more complex, three-phase process that covers the Late Classic–Terminal Classic transition. Beginning with the demographic evidence, the information gathered from an intensive test-pitting program carried out in the residential area (98 test pits in 55 residential units (RU), out of a total of 119 RU) showed that the Ma'ax III ceramic subphase (750–830 CE) corresponded to a renewed demographic peak—minimally 58% of the RU occupied and probabilistically 71% (Table 6.1). The Terminal Classic period represented by the Muuch ceramic phase (830–950/1000 CE) presents evidence for a population decrease, but still 49% of the RU tested (27/55) showed occupation during this time (Figure 6.3). This value for the post-830 CE occupation may be high, however, as it deals with superficial, unsealed, and poorly dated contexts; yet the probabilistic calculation suggests an even higher occupation rate, at 69% (n = 38 RU). Occupied units are distributed throughout the residential area but with a higher density in the vicinity of Group B (in a 600 m radius), where more than 80% of the RU occupied in the previous subphase continued to be dynamic during the Terminal Classic period (Hiquet

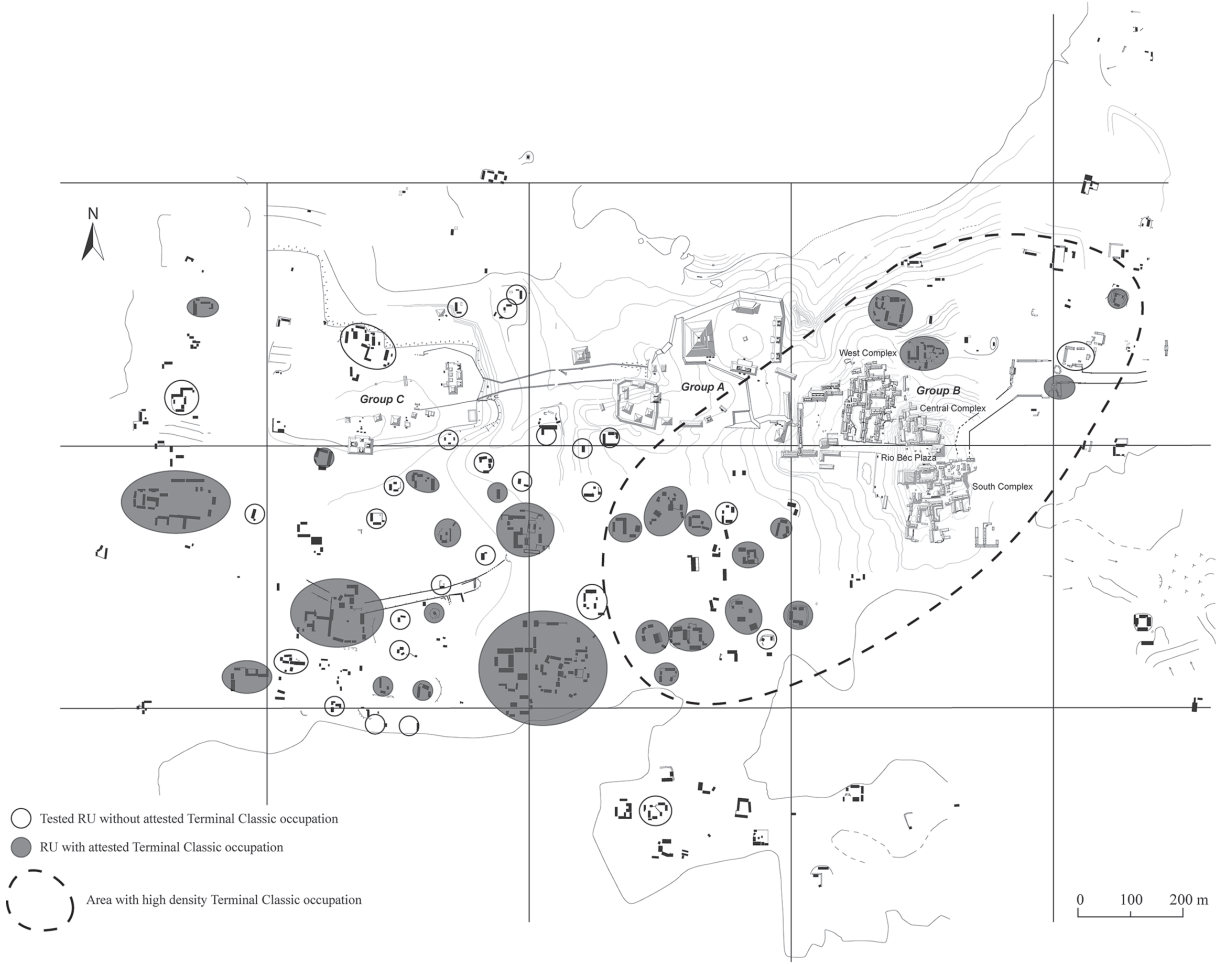

Figure 6.3. Map of Naachtun epicenter showing the Terminal Classic occupation (after Hiquet 2020).

et al. 2020). Such datasets show that the labor force needed to carry out and complete the architectural program of the Río Bec Plaza existed at Naachtun. Some other reason must be summoned to explain the abandonment of public construction on this plaza.

Interestingly some epigraphic evidence suggests a split in the local royal dynasty and the subsequent relocation of one branch to other cities. Even though Naachtun's history is obscured by the eroded nature of its monuments, some facts do emerge. The last monument dedicated in the Río Bec Plaza dates to 750–760 CE, while the last monument erected in Group A Main Plaza is Stela 10, with a preserved date of 9.16.10.0.0 or 761 CE (Nondédéo, Lacadena García-Gallo, and Garay 2019:345). At the same time, Calakmul Stelae 59 and 62, dated to 741 and 751 CE, mention the Bat emblem glyph in relation to two different rulers—the early one dedicated five stelae (25–27, 59–60) in 9.15.10.0.0 while his successor dedicated Stelae 62 and 88 in 9.16.0.0.0 (Marcus 1987; Martin and Grube 2008). Shortly afterward this same Bat emblem glyph appears further north in Oxpemul in 771 CE (9.17.0.0.0) on Stela 2 located in the West Plaza, and later in 10.0.0.0.0 (830 CE) on Stela 7 in the same plaza, where the emblem glyph was associated with the title of *kalo'mte'* (Grube 2008). An additional association of the Bat emblem glyph and the *kalo'mte'* title can be seen on the undated Altar 15 at this same site (Grube 2005, 2008; Martin 2005). These successive (741–830 CE) mentions of the Bat emblem glyph in northerly sites suggest that, after the fall of the Kaanul in Calakmul as a result of their defeat by Tikal, part of the Bat royal dynasty (initially established in Naachtun and allied with Tikal) perhaps split and ascended the throne in Calakmul, leaving a secondary branch of the royal family behind in Naachtun (Figure 6.4). All this seems to resonate in Naachtun, especially since the composition of the text of Stela 25, located in the Río Bec Plaza, shows a progressive loss of principles and canons of Maya writing on the part of the sculptors (according to Lacadena García-Gallo and Cases, personal communication 2014; see also Grube, Chapter 3, this volume). At Naachtun these putative events would have developed from 740 to 760 CE. This weakening of the royal power in Naachtun is the first phase of the political changes that occurred in the city.

Nevertheless, the local late context in Naachtun remained confused and ambiguous. On the one hand, there is a very late epigraphic mention in 9.16.10.0.0 (761 CE) of a Kaanul princess at Naachtun on Stela 10 (Vázquez López and Kupprat 2018:85). This Kaanul princess seems to have played an important role in the city since her name is associated with the dedicatory verb *k'al tuun* (stone binding), pointing to her capacity in overseeing

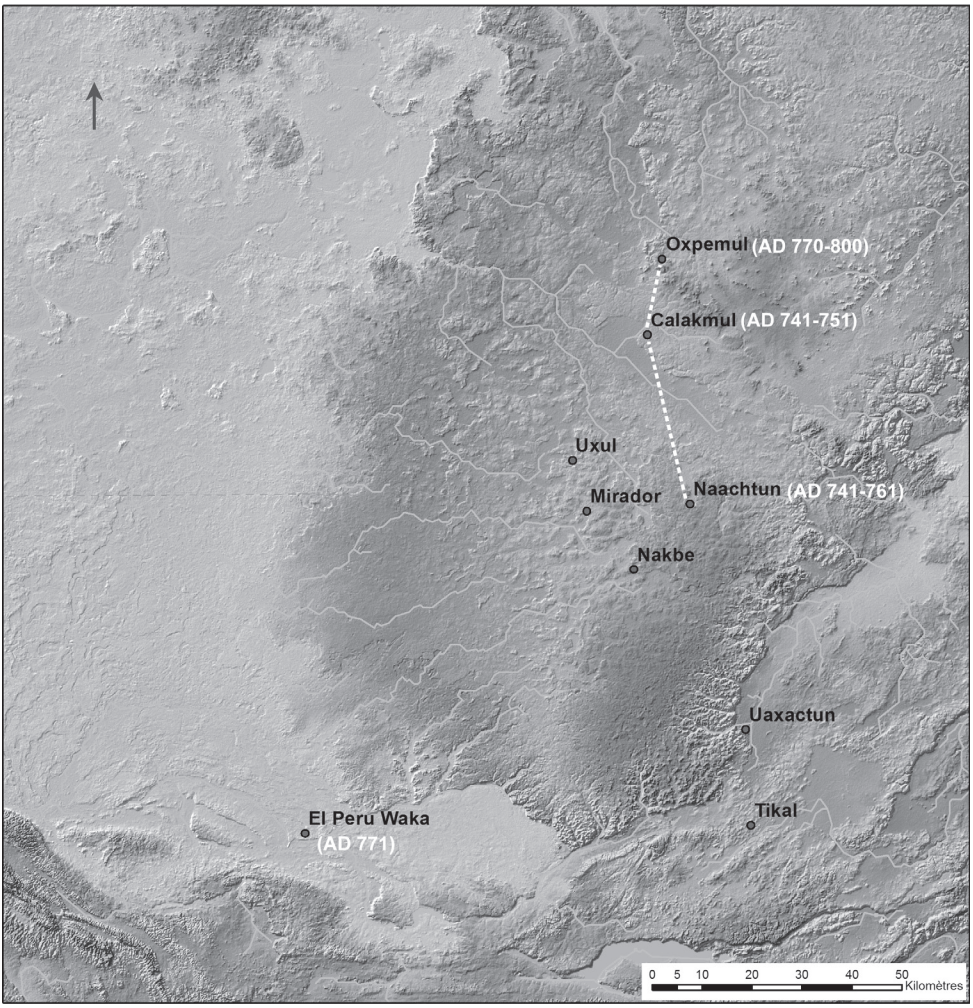

Figure 6.4. Map of northern Peten and southern Campeche that lists the last mentions of the Bat dynasty at the end of the Late Classic period and shows the possible movement northward of a branch of the Bat dynasty.

commemoration ceremonies at Naachtun (e.g., stela erection). At this point, however, we have no certainty that this princess is the same woman as the one depicted on Stela 27 buried in the Walled Compound stairway (see above). Likely, the long Kaanul domination over Naachtun (645?–731 CE) resulted in several Kaanul princesses having held important local positions (Nondédéo, Lacadena García-Gallo, and Garay 2019), and the Stela 10 reference—one of the latest to the Kaanul dynasty in the entire Maya Lowlands—suggests continuity in ties between what remained of the Kaanul dynasty expelled from

Calakmul and the local dynasty of Naachtun through 750 CE. Moreover, and interestingly, the Naachtun iconography at this time reflects a close relationship with the Kaanul royal art of Calakmul—e.g., the paired Stelae 18 and 19 of the Río Bec Plaza adopt the Calakmul tradition of representing the royal couple in front of a public building (Julie Patrois, personal communication 2017). We therefore argue that the first-phase change in Naachtun was due to a dynastic split that weakened the local power rather than to a total dynastic replacement.

On the other hand, below the feet of the queen (represented as a queen warrior in the Kaanul style with her latticework *huipil* typical of the Calakmul princesses) on Stela 18, there is a captive whose associated glyph mentions Uuxtetun, the very toponym of the city of Calakmul. This stela recounts a conflict from which Naachtun emerged victorious (Mathews et al. 2005). The absence of the prefix *aj-* (that of) associated with the toponym led Ana García Barrios and Verónica Vázquez López (2012) to argue that this scene of sacrifice took place in Calakmul itself. If the date 9.16.0.0.0 (751–770 CE) of this stela is correct (on the basis of associated iconographic motifs such as pectoral, nasal ornament, and shield; Patrois 2012), it implies a conflict between both cities and perhaps even between both branches of the same Bat lineage—a situation with similar antecedents in Maya history such as the conflict between Tikal and Dos Pilas, for example. This war might have resulted in the expulsion of the Bat lineage from Calakmul and the enthronement at that site of the ruler Bolon K'awiil II, who had no affiliation with the Bat lineage (Martin and Grube 2008). In addition, the queen associated with the "stone-binding ritual" mentioned on Naachtun Stela 10 in 761 CE is probably the same queen depicted on Stela 18, as both monuments are roughly contemporaneous and the individual on Stela 18 shows a possible Kaanul origin through its latticework *huipil*.

In this context of post-Kaanul reorganization and political reshuffling in the Maya Lowlands, it is impossible to determine whether the Princess of Suutz', whose arrival at El Peru in 771 CE is recorded on Stela 32 (dated to 790 CE; Guenter 2005, 2014a:161–162), came from Naachtun or from another place where a branch of the Suutz' lineage existed (most probably by then, Oxpemul).

Naachtun Stela 10, located on the Main Plaza, has the last legible date in Naachtun (761 CE). It precedes the total disappearance of inscriptions at the site. This suggests the probable disintegration of royal authority in Naachtun by 800 CE, when several public and private spaces directly related to the royal power were abandoned—in particular the Walled Complex in Group

A as well as the West Complex in Group B (Perla-Barrera et al. 2016). This ended the second phase (760–800 CE) of the Naachtun political change.

As shown by Julien Sion (2016), toward the end of the eighth century, power fell into the hands of noble families who led the social, economic, and political transformations of the second phase. The new regime allowed for relative prosperity at the site with construction investments limited to the domestic sphere and no longer to the public one. These transformations seem to have been driven by the powerful noble families living in the South Complex (south side of the Río Bec Plaza) and specifically in Patio 28, probably by means of a strong investment in the long-distance exchange of goods and raw materials beginning as early as 750 CE. The trend was accentuated from 800 to 830 CE and onward, when this economic prosperity was solely marked through the acquisition of exotic goods with little residential construction taking place. From 800 to 950 CE this process thus corresponds to our third transformative phase at Naachtun.

Although these families were not of royal origin, they had probably been part of the royal court and then occupied important political positions in the city, as indicated both by the location of Patio 28 in close relation with public Buildings 6O-4 and 6O-5 siding the Río Bec Plaza (Sion 2016) and by the content of some burials (e.g., Burial 37) whose grave goods contents resemble earlier royal ones (Barrientos et al. 2015).

Everything indicates that, during this third phase, Naachtun became particularly well connected to the new trading networks that appeared in the Maya Lowlands. Indicators of interaction with southern Campeche multiplied and an important east–west axis of exchanges developed with northern Belize, Tabasco, and Usumacinta regions (Sion 2016). From 750 CE onward the pottery of Naachtun incorporates the Chablekal, Tich', and Belize groups, as well as Campeche Gloss wares and Torro Gouged Incised types. By 830–850 CE important quantities of the Altar and Balancan groups are introduced (Sion et al. 2017). The analysis of lithic material shows a significant increase in opaque obsidian coming from Central Mexico (Zacualtipan and Ucareo) as well as a significant use of granite grinding tools from the Maya Mountains (Andrieu 2012, 2013). This also coincides with an increase of Atlantic and Pacific seashells (Cotom Nimatuj 2019). The overall pattern suggests that the development of new distribution networks of exotic goods through the east–west axis benefited from the gradual disappearance (by 730–750 CE) of Kaanul political influence in the Maya Lowlands (e.g., Ball 2014:442–443; Sion 2016). This new economic context was materialized by

the dynamism of the Naachtun South Complex courtyards (in Group B) that expanded during the third phase (up to approximately 900 CE) as they welcomed more families. The demographic growth in these units generally resulted in the construction of small annexes of poor quality to buildings and in the subdivision of rooms to house more families but not in the construction of completely new complexes (Sion 2016).

Gradually, then, there was a paradigm shift in Naachtun during the third transformative phase; the elites no longer displayed their prestige and social status through the architectural quality of their residences (see Halperin and Garrido 2020) but rather through their ability to participate in long-distance networks and to acquire prestige goods and artifacts for domestic use (Sion 2016). Such a shift matches dynamics operating in other areas of the Maya Lowlands during the transition from the Classic to Postclassic periods (Demarest and Martinez 2010; Masson 2002; Źrałka and Hermes 2012). The exchanges controlled by Naachtun's new elites—probably noble families previously close to the royal dynasty before its disappearance—made it possible to stabilize the post-royal political situation, establish new socioeconomic dynamics in both Group B and residential areas, and delay the final population loss that occurred by 900–950 CE.

Conclusion

The Naachtun case study shows how war and rivalry inside the ruling elite could weaken a local dynasty during a period of strong social and political troubles affecting the Maya Lowlands. In the model that is emerging from Naachtun—which would admittedly benefit from a few additional radiocarbon and epigraphic absolute dates—the takeover by noble families would have both precipitated and compensated for the disappearance of the local dynasty, creating a sharp rupture with the previous ruling system. The new system was then drastically reoriented toward the import of quotidian and prestige goods instead of the construction of public buildings and spaces. Furthermore, this takeover delayed the progressive population decrease in residential areas, a situation now observed in sites where a discrepancy has been clearly established between the demise of the royal dynasty and the process of abandonment (see Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume; A. Chase et al., Chapter 19, this volume). In the residential areas of Naachtun, the population decrease does not seem to correlate directly with the first and second transformative phases of major political change, as the 750–830 CE

interval corresponds to the period of demographic apogee at Naachtun. The population peak at this time even exceeded that of the first apogee attained in the Early Classic period (see Table 6.1).

All things considered, the sociopolitical and economic reorganization of the city did not allow Naachtun to overcome the collapse. The erosion of the noble families' authority became gradually noticeable in the dismantling of buildings and departure of inhabitants—as shown by stratigraphic sequences, ritual deposits introduced into the rubble of early deserted structures, and some ^{14}C dates relating to a series of abandonment events that extended throughout the ninth and tenth centuries (Perla-Barrera and Sion 2018; Sion 2016). Once the site was completely abandoned, there were only occasional reoccupations in the old Classic plazas in which new residential units were constructed—e.g., in front of Acropolis V—and still occupied into the Early Postclassic period, as attested by the presence of a "C"-shaped building and ceramics of the Silho and Tohil groups (Perla-Barrera and Sion 2019; Sion 2019). The inhabitants of these last residential units are supposed to be the authors of the very late ritual deposits carried out between 990 and 1150 CE in buildings that symbolized the old royal power (Dussol et al. 2019).

The image we now have of the Suutz' dynasty is that of a royal house with a strong territorial anchor that had Naachtun as its seat throughout the Classic period; at the same time, it was a rather mobile royal house that did not hesitate to take the opportunity to control sites such as Calakmul, Uxul, Oxpemul, and perhaps others. The movement of the Suutz' royal house to these northern centers perhaps anticipated the phenomenon of collapse and foreshadowed in a certain way a migration by a portion of the Peten population toward regions of the Yucatan Peninsula that were still dynamic during the tenth century.

Acknowledgments

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We dedicate this chapter to the memory of our friend and colleague, Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo, who participated in the writing of this paper and read the first version of this text.

Note

1. For a detailed explanation of the calculations, see Desachy 2018, and for the Naachtun case study, see Hiquet 2020. It was then possible to include the numerous undated lots from the excavations of residential areas in the estimation of occupancy rates instead of leaving them aside, which logically would underestimate occupations. Therefore, probabilistic occupation rates refer to this treatment, in complement to raw data (i.e., satisfyingly dated events only).

7

Deciphering the Collapse

An Account of Kingship in the Terminal Classic

CHRISTOPHE HELMKE, JULIE A. HOGGARTH, AND JAIME J. AWE

This chapter provides an account of Terminal Classic kingship. In emphasizing account, we focus on the narrative themes of Terminal Classic texts as these pertain to the institution of kingship in one particular area of the Maya region. We first establish the research area in question before delving into a synthesis of the narrative features of the historical record of the region, the eastern central lowlands. Here we focus on the archaeological sites of Naranjo and Yaxha in the eastern Peten, and smaller satellite centers, including the locality of Komkom that is known from the glyphic inscriptions, and the archaeological site of Baking Pot, in western Belize. The interplay between these centers is at the core of this study, as these shed great light on the historical events that led up to the cessation of kingship in this part of the Maya region.

The primary source of our study is the lengthy glyphic text that adorns a cylindrical vase that we recently discovered at Baking Pot. This vase has been dubbed the Komkom Vase, owing to the titles of the original owner of the vase. The first sherds of this vase came to light in July 2015 as part of excavations conducted by the Belize Valley Archaeological Reconnaissance Project, under the direction of Jaime J. Awe and Julie A. Hoggarth. The vase was recovered in a fragmentary condition, scattered over a relatively large area, intermixed with a mass of other artifacts in a rich peri-abandonment deposit at the base of the audiencia (Structure B7) that constitutes the primary access to the royal palace of the site. The vase is a truly unique find. It is a Chinos Black-on-cream vase rendered in a style that is highly reminiscent of codices, and its exterior is covered entirely by an extensive glyphic text, originally composed of 202 glyph blocks. Given the length of the text, we cannot adequately provide a passable synthesis here. Nevertheless, a preliminary study

of this text has already appeared elsewhere (Helmke, Hoggarth et al. 2017), and a complete study has been prepared and is forthcoming as we write this chapter (Helmke, Hoggarth, and Awe 2018); we refer the interested reader to these publications. This is a surprisingly rich source and is in fact probably the single longest and most detailed account of the Terminal Classic discovered to date. This source is unparalleled by its length but also surpasses any heretofore discovered historical source in terms of its details and the pace of the narrative.

What type of narrative does the Komkom Vase relate? Does it fit neatly within the motifs, and does it relate the narrative themes that were prevalent during the period, or is it uncharacteristic in its details and the focus that it places on distinctive historical features? In order to better resolve these queries and ascertain the place of this vase in terms of Terminal Classic narratives, we have elaborated a comparative and diachronic overview of the glyphic texts of the region. This naturally raises the question as to what type of written sources we have at our disposal and what these sources convey as to the sociopolitics of the time. What type of source are glyphic texts when these are gauged against the rich contemporaneous archaeological record? We hope to shed some light by providing a comprehensive overview of the glyphic corpus of the area, in the final century of centralized rulership in the eastern central lowlands (771–889 CE). In outlining a brief life history of the Komkom Vase, at the end of chapter, we pause to reflect on the archaeological context in which the vase was found, considering the vase itself as a tangible witness to the events surrounding the fall of the kings of Baking Pot. In so doing, we sketch another narrative that outlines the changing patterns of kingship in the Terminal Classic, until the cessation of the institution in the ninth century.

The Regional Context: A Political Geography

As a means of providing a background for the historical texts that we will examine, we have defined a catchment area, as it were, centered on the archaeological site of Baking Pot and spanning in an even circular radius all the way to Tikal, 65.4 km to the west. Naranjo's martial engagements in the late eighth century affected mostly neighboring sites and extended somewhat sheepishly as far as Tikal (see Grube 2004:201; Helmke and Kettunen 2011:42; Martin and Grube 2000:76), thereby warranting the use of this primary site to define the maximal limit of this catchment area. This catchment area is a way of defining all the centers that interacted with one another during the

eighth and ninth centuries, especially in diplomatic and martial terms, with Baking Pot at the proverbial eye of the storm. In so doing, we are able to focus specifically on one area and to concentrate on the historical process at play in this subregion in order to better understand the sequentiality of events and how these affected outcomes that led to the cessation of kingship in this area and ultimately the abandonment of associated settlements.

In using Tikal as the western boundary of the catchment area, this then goes on to include Jimbal, Xultun, and La Honradez to the northwest; La Milpa to the north; Caracol to the south; and Ucanal, Ixlu, and Yaxha to the southwest (Figure 7.1). In addition to spatially defining an area of influence and identifying centers that share a higher degree of connectedness by virtue of geographical proximity, this also presents us with the possibility to draft the territorial extents of each of these centers and to define how these might have related with each other on account of territorial delineations (Helmke and Awe 2012).

One of the initial attempts to qualify the collapse was by means of plotting the last known dates of monuments across the Maya Lowlands and to subject this distribution to statistical processing and mathematical modeling. This was undertaken by Frederick Bove (1981), Kenneth Kvamme (1990), and Frederick Neiman (1997), among others, who showed that the patterns of final dates were distributed in a nonlinear and heterogeneous fashion across the Maya area. These initial studies have since been followed by the more recent approaches of Eva Jobbová (2010) as well as Claire Ebert and her colleagues (2012), using improved methods of Geographic Information Systems. Whereas these approaches differ in the details of their application, they all share the same focus on the last known dated monuments. While this may seem to prove a useful and comparable yardstick across the Maya Lowlands, we must recall that these models place a huge amount of reliance on one fixed date, which is assumed to be the very last one (and which unfortunately cannot take into account eroded monuments). These dates are also poor proxies since they can only ever relate the point in time when a given ruler was still apparently able to direct the resources and infrastructure necessary to maintain the age-old traditions of commemorating the passage of time and dutifully conducting ritual observations. As such, these dates give us a terminus a quo threshold for the cessation of rulership, not the specific dating of a particular event. The abandonment of royal house and of palaces, or even settlements is not on the date of the latest monument, but after that date. The amount of time that elapsed after the terminus a quo is unspecified, and in most cases remains unknown.

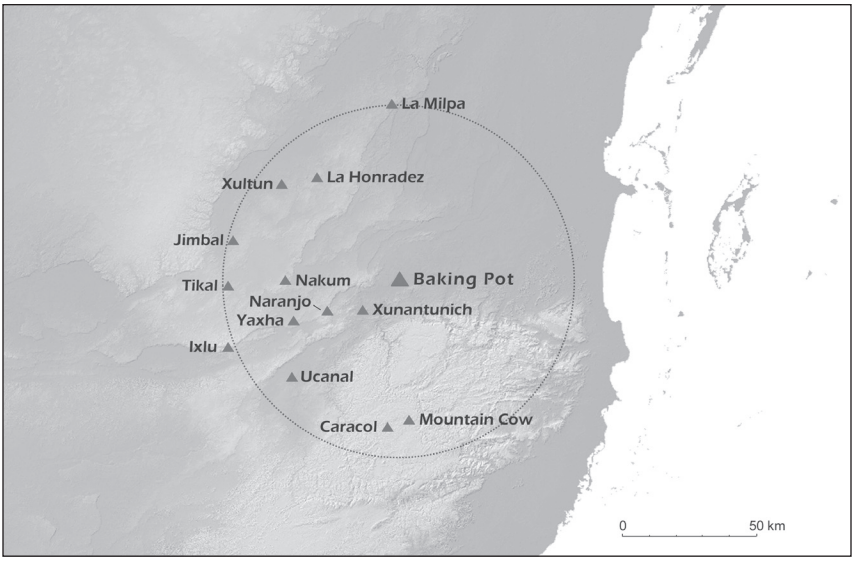


Figure 7.1. Map of the eastern central lowlands showing the sites encompassed in the catchment area defined around Baking Pot (map by Christophe Helmke).

Regardless of the specifics, these studies have shown that these dates cluster into varying patterns that can be grouped into discrete regions (e.g., Ebert et al. 2014:Figure 3). These can be divided into three broad and discrete "last bastions," which include the Puuc and central Yucatecan sites to the north, Tonina and its environs to the west, and a large swathe of the eastern central lowlands, spanning from La Muñeca in the north, down to Xutilha in the south. This broad eastern swathe is evidently of great interest to us, particularly the central portion, extending out from Tikal in the west and into Belize in the east. As such, if these final dates do provide some sort of intelligible proxy for the abandonment of sites, then it is also clear that an articulate narrative of the collapse will have to be sensitive to regional differences and to provide differing accounts of each in turn. Rather than a detriment, we find that the areal or subregional approach is of particular value, for it allows us to focus in a concerted and coherent fashion on the specific historical processes of the given region. As part of the earlier study by Ebert and colleagues (2014), for instance, as well as the doctoral research of Stanley Guenter (2014b:246–249), the eastern central lowlands were successfully defined as a separate region exhibiting greater internal coherence and homogeneity than any of the adjoining areas of the Maya area. It is on the basis of these parameters that we define the present catchment area, wherein we

Figure 7.2. The two latest monuments of the eastern central lowlands. (*a*) front of Stela 10 of Xultun dated to 889 CE; (*b*) detail of the right side of the same stela (after Morley 1937:plate 80b–c); and (*c*) Altar 26 of Caracol dated to 884 CE (photograph by Christophe Helmke).

examine not only the distribution of last known dates but also the last century of historical sources leading up to the cessation of texts.

The Regional Context: The Historical Sources

The historical texts of this region span until 889 CE with the partial date preserved on the side of Stela 10 at Xultun (Figure 7.2a–b).[1] In terms of relevance to the historical narrative presented on the Komkom Vase, we need to double back at least to the end of the eighth century and to the reign of the penultimate ruler of Naranjo, one "Itzamnaaj" K'awil.

He appears in the monumental record in March 771 CE, with his birth, 13 years before his accession (see Martin and Grube 2000:82–83; Savchenko 2015; Schele and Grube 1995:136). As such, it is the 9.17.0.0.0 period ending that immediately precedes the birth of this individual that we use to define the lower threshold of the historical span for this region. In the twelve decades that the monuments span, we have precisely 101 known and well-dated

Table 7.1. The last century of historical data for the Eastern Central Lowlands, by site, arranged according to chronological sequence by longevity

Site	Span of Dates	No. of Dates	No. of Monuments
La Honradez	771	1	1
La Milpa	780	1	1
Yaxha	789–797	4	2
Naranjo	771–820	41	17
Mountain Cow	810–835	4	2
Nakum	771–849	5	4
Xunantunich	820–849	4	4
Ucanal	849	1	1
Caracol	798–884	26	15
Tikal	771–869	5	3
Ixlu	849–879	2	2
Jimbal	879	1	1
Xultun	800–889	6	4

historical references from 13 different sites (see Tables 7.1 and 7.3). These are all from large monolithic monuments, excluding dates on artifacts and other portable objects. Together these dates are found on 57 separate monuments, and the incidence of dates versus monuments at each site are nearly perfectly correlated, with their covariate incidence occurring according to a 0.9776 linear correlation coefficient.

From this tabulation we can see that, for most sites, there are fewer than half a dozen recorded events; for many, there are fewer than four. The real powerhouses of history, if we are to take ubiquity as a measure, are evidently Caracol, which contributes a quarter (25%) of all historical events and Naranjo between a third and half (41%). Tikal, surprisingly, produced very few historical texts during the Terminal Classic (5%), despite its importance and the longevity of its occupation and dynastic activity. Thus, our understanding of the history of this area is evidently swayed by the events and deeds recorded on the monuments of just two sites, although the diversity of references from the other centers is remarkable for their longevity and for either duplicating, complementing or nuancing events cited at either Caracol or Naranjo.

Calendrical Celebrations

Of all of these events, around half (n = 50) are celebrations of period-ending events, the commemoration of these important calendrical stations and the

proper observation of associated rituals. These include *katun* period endings (every 20 years at the end of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth of Baktun 9, as well naught, first, second and third of Baktun 10), as well as half-*katun,* or *lahuntun,* period endings (every 10 years), and even half-*lahuntun* (every five years), as *hotun* and *holahuntun* endings, although the latter are exceptionally rare and represented by singular instances (see Table 7.3). In contrast, the katun celebrations account for a little more than half of all period endings celebrated (n = 27) and the *lahuntun* observation for the other half (n = 19).

Interestingly, some period endings were observed in greater numbers than others, and these cumulatively may give us a better impression as to the stability and vibrancy of polities during the final century of the Classic period (see also Grube, Chapter 3, this volume). For the occurrence of the period endings commemorated during the last century, there is a noticeable buildup in the decades preceding the 10.0.0.0.0 Long Count and then a marked fall off after this date. The two peaks, thus formed, undoubtedly represent two distinct phases in the perpetuation of the institution of kingship. The earlier peak, centered around 810 CE (culminating at the 9.19.0.0.0 period ending), for the most part represents the maintenance of royal prerogatives by well-established and legitimate dynastic houses, whereas the second, smaller peak around 849 CE (10.1.0.0.0) characterizes the last efforts of the remaining high elites, trying to maintain the order of old, including the rulers of subsidiary sites. The trough of 830 CE that separates both peaks is all the more remarkable given that it coincides with the pivotal period ending of 10.0.0.0.0. The few monuments erected to commemorate this calendrical turning point can only mark a period of social upheaval and disorder that affected the performance of royal houses.

Warfare

Whereas references to war pepper the written sources of the Late Classic period, these occur among other notable events in the lives and times of rulers. In all, the martial events recorded in the historical texts (postdating 771 CE) of the eastern central lowlands, amount to only 14 instances—a remarkably low figure. These martial events include the "burning" and "axing" of settlements, the seizure of captives and their "presentation." It is of note also that *pul* "burning" as a martial action is found preferentially in the texts of the eastern central lowlands (Kettunen 2018), particularly in this catchment area under scrutiny. In much the same way, *chuk* "capture" is regionally

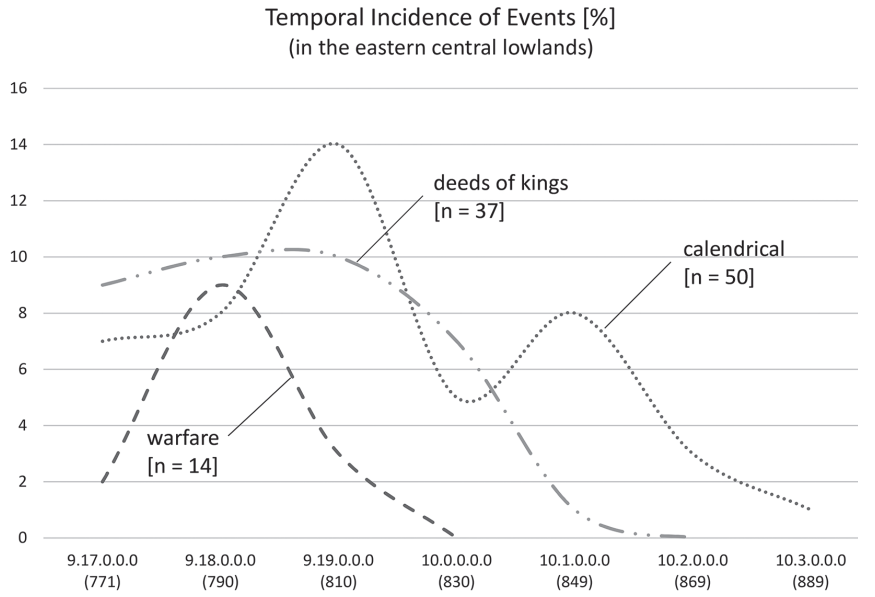


Figure 7.3. Chart illustrating the absolute incidence and diachronic distribution of narrative themes in the monumental record of the eastern central lowlands (chart by Christophe Helmke).

dominant in the texts of the Usumacinta (Proskouriakoff 1960:470). These differences are thought to reflect different types of bellicose actions in the various regions. Nevertheless, references to war are inevitably couched in the preferred phraseology of a given region and are therefore, by necessity, literary references (e.g., Brosman 1992). It is due to this literary aspect that references to war appear in the glyphic corpus in the way that they do rather than as impartial accounts of martial engagements.

From a diachronic vantage we can also identify some important patterns, including a marked increase to martial references as the Late Classic comes to a close, with a distinct peak around 790 CE (Figure 7.3). Commenting on this increase, David Stuart has aptly remarked: "The late emphasis on warfare in Classic historical texts still requires explanation, and it must be viewed in the context of other trends we see reflected in the inscriptions before the collapse" (Stuart 1993:335). Surprisingly, after that date, the references to war decrease steadily until 830 CE when all mention to war has disappeared from the written record. This salient omission coincides with the dip in calendrical references, and in the monumental record as a whole, and is surprising given that archaeological evidence does not provide positive evidence for the cessation of bellicose encounters, with some sites resorting

to the construction of fortifications, especially palisades, during this period (Scherer and Golden 2018; Yaeger and Brown 2018). The representation of warfare in the historical record may therefore provide a very partial picture.

The Lives and Deeds of Kings

Accounting for calendrical events and martial references in the glyphic corpus, we are then left with a third category that essentially includes everything else (n = 37). These include the birth of kings, their accessions to the throne as well as pre-inaugural rituals, celebrations of jubilees of years on the throne, impersonation rituals and dances, the arrival of lords to particular places as part of larger royal progresses, the carrying of kings on palanquins to diplomatic encounters, the dedication of buildings and the refurbishment of ballcourts, the erection of stelae, symbolic dynastic refounding events, and even down to their own portrayal on monuments. As such, we can consider this third category to be focused principally on the royal person, which is why we designate it the "lives and deeds of kings." Owing to erosion, there are also many instances wherein a given event is unknown, and in other cases the event is poorly understood as the reading is unclear.

Discussion

On the whole, from our review of the Terminal Classic texts, we can see that most events entail the celebration of calendrical rituals (49%), followed by an ill-defined category that we refer to as the deeds of kings (37%), with warfare and martial engagements making up a considerably smaller fraction of the historical record (14%). This breakdown may be surprising, even though this is a synchronic itemization for the entire century, especially since warfare is usually signaled out as both one of the primary causes and symptoms of the collapse. Based on the historical purview provided by the texts of the eastern central lowlands, one would certainly not gain this impression.

However, a diachronic vantage provides a more nuanced view. Plotting out these events chronologically, we can see that the calendrical celebrations not only dominate the texts of the Terminal Classic but these steadily increase until around 800 CE, after which there is a drop in the record of these events, and possibly also in the concomitant observation of rituals until 830 CE. As we have seen, this is then followed by a last gasp, as it were, with a final peak centered on 849 CE, until the textual record of the region ceases along its margins, with the last date of 884 CE at Caracol (see A. Chase and

D. Chase 2015a; Helmke 2019:41) (Figure 7.2c) and 889 CE at Xultun (Figure 7.2a–b). The category focused on the lives and deeds of kings has a smaller peak that is also centered on 810 CE, before gradually falling and disappearing altogether before the final peak in calendrical celebrations. This signals a marked deemphasis on kings as the sole detainers of power and suggests commensurate increase in power among other segments of the social elite.

Based on these observations, it has been argued for some time that we are seeing a drastic shift, after 830 CE, to what can be called the Terminal Classic rhetoric (Grube 2013b; Helmke et al. 2010:120–121; Stuart 1993:335–336). As part of this rhetoric, the sole focus of texts is on the propitiation of deities and the celebration of calendrical turning points via the celebration of age-old rituals. The king appears in these texts, but only in the capacity of ritual officiant, and the important turning points of the royal biography are left unvoiced. Some of the monuments of the time also increasingly depict the ruler accompanied by a subsidiary individual, which is indicative of greater decentralization and the diffusion of authority out of the royal palace through increasing power-sharing with other elites (e.g., Chase et al. 1991:13).

The Narrative of the Komkom Vase

In homing in on Baking Pot—the epicenter of the catchment area here defined—we can see that the abandonment of this site requires us to properly account for the remarkable vase discovered there in 2015 (Hoggarth, Awe et al. 2016). But abandonment was not always final, and we need to take into consideration that the abandonment of a given royal palace does not necessarily coincide with the abandonment of the population of a concomitant settlement. Momentarily setting the archaeological context aside and focusing the vase, we can begin to understand what this object and the extensive account recorded on its circumference tell us about Maya kingship in the Terminal Classic.

This vase is the oeuvre of a highly accomplished artisan, produced in a workshop of the highest caliber, without question a royal commission (Figure 7.4). It was created at a time when leading models would have us believe that Maya polities, ruled under ancient royal dynasties, were undergoing decay, decrepitude, and political destabilization. This single vase runs up against so much of what we thought we knew about the ancient Maya and opens up a true window onto the events that transpired in the Terminal Classic in this part of the Maya world.

The vase has a basal diameter of 15.1 cm and would have measured ca.

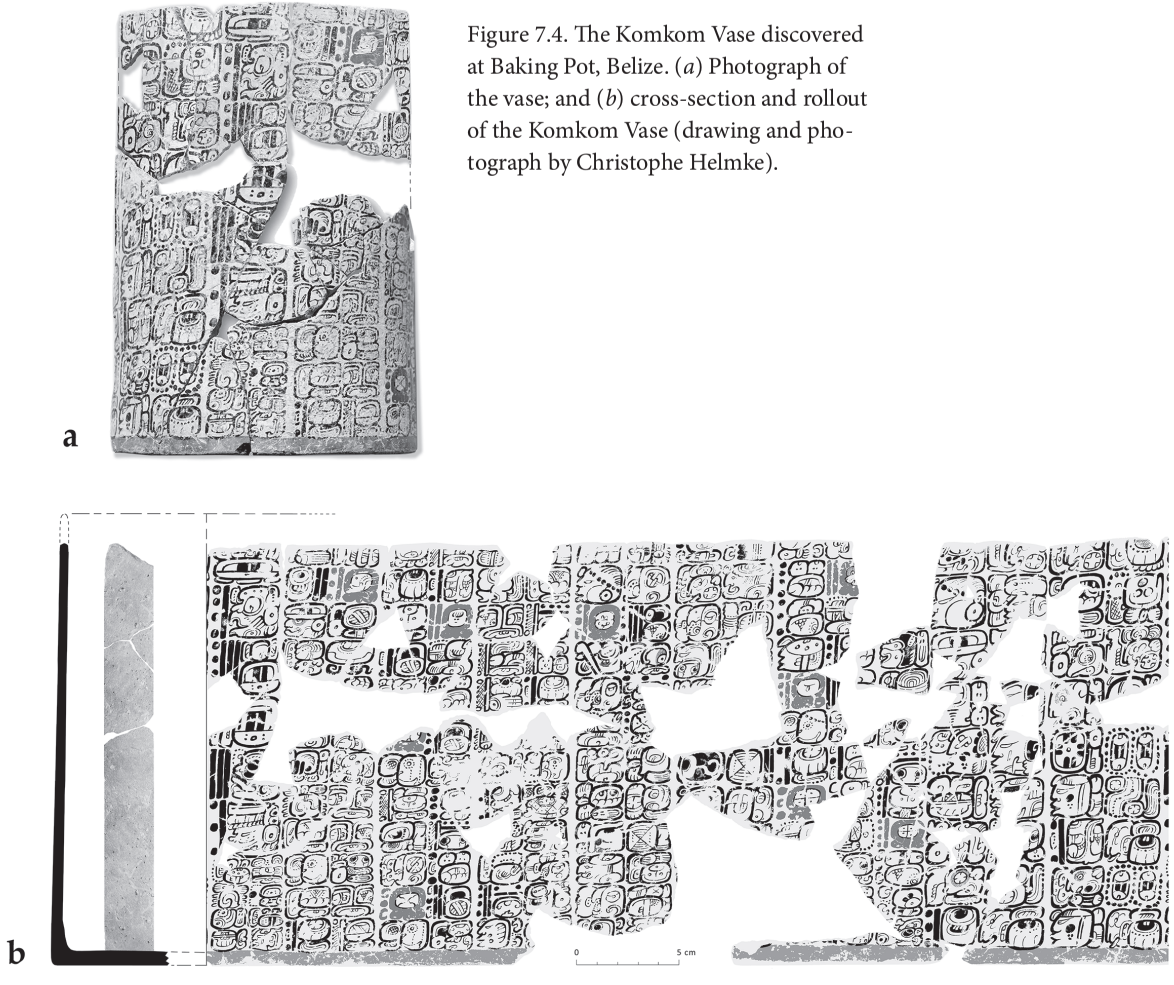


Figure 7.4. The Komkom Vase discovered at Baking Pot, Belize. (*a*) Photograph of the vase; and (*b*) cross-section and rollout of the Komkom Vase (drawing and photograph by Christophe Helmke).

Baking Pot Vase Komkom

21.7 cm high. Although relatively small when compared to other Late Classic vases, the extensive text that covers the Komkom Vase provides a spellbinding and fast-paced narrative, essentially unique in terms of Classic Maya historical accounts for its detail and narrative form. In terms of the vase's biography or artifactual life history, each of the major phases have affected the vase and shaped its meaning from the social matrix in which it was used in antiquity. Thus, "production, exchange, ownership, and use may all affect the way in which an artefact is used and understood" and "an object's meaning may be built upon, transformed and manipulated throughout its life history, as it changes hands, is physically altered, and comes to be used or displayed in new contexts" (Ashby 2009:2; see also Gosden and Marshall 1999:149). This is precisely what we can observe for the Komkom Vase as well and is what we consider here.

The vase was produced in a royal workshop for the consumption of the king of Komkom, a subsidiary site known from the monumental texts of Naranjo, quite possibly located in the Belize Valley. The original owner of the vase is not named, but based on the lengthy pedigree we can see that the owner was the son of the king of Komkom, named Sak Witzil Baah ("white montane gopher") and a princess of Naranjo (Helmke, Hoggarth et al. 2017). Based on a number of shared paleographic features, we surmise that the vase was owned by a king of Komkom named Kamal Xok ("death? shark"), who is named on an unprovenanced bowl in a private collection (K2730) (Helmke, Hoggarth, and Awe 2018; Kerr 1990:276).

In addition to this bowl and the beautiful vase found at Baking Pot, other portable objects bearing the names of the kings of Komkom are surprisingly many, with two partial vases recovered at Buenavista del Cayo (Houston et al. 1992:Figure 14; Reents-Budet et al. 2000:Figure 6c; Jason Yaeger personal communication 2018), an Early Classic shell gorget found in a royal tomb at the same site (Yaeger et al. 2015, 2018), as well as an unprovenanced bowl in the collections of the Fundación para las Bellas Artes y la Cultura in Guatemala (Helmke, Polyukhovych et al. 2017). These objects attest to the importance and vibrancy of this royal house and also testify to important links with Naranjo. That relations between the two sites were tumultuous is suggested by the text of Stela 22 at Naranjo, which relates the defeat of Komkom in 696 CE at the hands of K'ahk' Tiliiw Chan Chaahk, the Naranjo king. And yet, some 116 years later, the pedigree found on the Komkom Vase suggests that the owner was the issue of the union between the two royal houses, indicating that reversals in war could be followed by peace hewn in matrimonial alliances.

The lengthy glyphic text that adorns the vase was composed of 202 separate glyph blocks. This makes it the longest known glyphic text documented to date on a ceramic vessel and makes it among the top ten longest texts anywhere in the Maya world. The closest comparisons for this text are the hieroglyphic stairs of Yaxchilan, La Corona, and El Palmar, which all provide long historical narratives. In much the same way, the text of the Komkom Vase provides the same type of historical narrative, and yet this vase is unique for the level of detail represented since the entire narrative is condensed within 10 lengthy and complex sentences. The timing of events and the sequence are also unique features of the vase since these relate episodes that are only days apart, focused particularly on two chapters, in the spring (February 15–17) and in the summer (July 19–August 30) of the year 799 (Table 7.2).

This text provides a stunning account, recording a series of events involving many agents who oddly are preferentially referred to by titles rather than names (as though the opening segments of the text that introduced these individuals were presented elsewhere and omitted here). Based on these features, such as the narrative appearing as it were in media res, the level of detail and fast-paced narrative, and yet the syncopation of events between February and July, all speak of collation that suggests that the text on the vase is a partial copy of a codical annal, composed at an earlier date. As a copy of

Table 7.2. Summary of the chronology and main events recorded in the lengthy text of the Komkom Vase

Baking Pot Vase Komkom

Clause	Long Count	Gregorian Date	Events
Clause 0	9.19.1.15.8	Apr. 27, 812 CE	Probable dedication of the vase
Clause 1	9.18.8.8.12	Feb. 19, 799 CE	Drilling of fire; Eroded event at Chak Mayte'; Meeting of figures from Naranjo; Return to Sak Kabniil
Clause 2	9.18.8.8.14	Feb. 21, 799 CE	Burning of Sak Suutz'
Clause 3	9.18.8.8.16	Feb. 23, 799 CE	Return to . . . k Witznal
Clause 4	9.18.8.8.18	Feb. 25, 799 CE	Return to Ik' Nahbal; Person from Naranjo running; Impersonating? the deities of the Yaxha king
Clause 5	9.18.8.16.6	Jul. 23, 799 CE	Axing of Yaxha; Flight of K'inich Lakamtun; Ascent to Usu'l; Ascent to Yaxha
Clause 6	9.18.8.16.10	Jul. 27, 799 CE	Burning of Ibiil
Clause 7	9.18.8.17.2	Aug. 8, 799 CE	Return to Ya . . .
Clause 8	9.18.8.17.8	Aug. 14, 799 CE	Burning of Pekom
Clause 9	9.18.8.17.19	Aug. 25, 799 CE	Capture? of an individual from Tikal
Clause 10	9.18.9.0.8	Sep. 3, 799 CE	Dance ritual (war dance?)

a codex that recorded detailed history, this makes the Komkom Vase unique since these sources were long surmised to have existed and now we may be able to gaze upon one, albeit through a skeuomorphic translation from codex to vase.

The events that are recorded on the vase can be broadly classed into the same three thematic categories that we have identified above and are detailed elsewhere (Helmke, Hoggarth et al. 2017). For the rituals celebrated in conjunction with calendrical stations, we have two occurrences of the verb *jatz'*, literally "to strike" but here meant in reference to the striking of fire through sparks issued from knocking flints against one another (Zender 2004a:5–8). For the deeds of kings, we have the verbs of motion for the individuals who travel across the detailed landscape recorded in the text, such as *pakaax ~ pakx,* "to return" (4 ×); *t'ab,* "ascend, go up" (2 ×); and *pek,* "to meet, parlay." In addition, more ritualistic actions include *joch',* the "drilling" of fire, a possible deity impersonation ritual, and a dancing event that culminates the entire narrative. Regarding war, a whole array of verbs is detailed including the regionally preferred *pul,* "to burn, set ablaze"; *ch'ak,* "to axe, chop," and resultative verbs of motion including *ahn,* "to run"; and *lok',* "to flee."

The latter verbs are used predominantly in reference to K'inich Lakamtun ("radiant banner-stone"), the king of Yaxha (see Grube 2000a:262–265) who appears to be the primary target in the latter part of the narrative. The attacks on Yaxha result in the flight of the king, who is pursued across the landscape, as related on the vase. One of the later mentions to this king states (Figure 7.5):

> *i-lok'-ooy ma' ch'ahb ma' y-ahk'ab-aal k'inich lakam *tun t'ab-aay us-u'l yax-a' ajaw*
> 'and he fled, the powerless K'inich Lakamtun; he went up to Usu'l, the Yaxha king'

The dishonorable flight of the king is all the more pathetic given the meaning of the name of the place to which he flees, as Usu'l translates to "where flies abound." In a fit of boldness, the attackers pursue farther and farther west, until in the penultimate sentence we find a reference to an individual from Tikal, quite possibly relating his capture, resulting from a skirmish on the outskirts of the great city. This echoes almost exactly a similar encounter related in the text of Stela 22 at Naranjo, some 104 years earlier (Helmke, Hoggarth, and Awe 2018:79).

In the initial part of the narrative on the Komkom Vase we see mentions to subsidiary figures that are cited by title alone and are also known from

Figure 7.5. The segment of the Komkom Vase describing the humiliating flight of the king of Yaxha in July 799 CE (photograph by Julie Hoggarth).

Baking Pot Vase Komkom

the texts of Naranjo. Thus, whereas this provides a record of history from the vantage of the kings of Komkom, oblique mentions to Naranjo are also made. This is significant since the lengthy text on the back of Stela 12 at Naranjo duplicates many of the details recorded on the vase. Yet, whereas the king of Naranjo is nowhere named on the vase, not all too surprisingly, on Stela 12 the one and sole agent for all events is the king of Naranjo, "Itzamnaaj" K'awil. Raised in 800 CE, Stela 12 is a close "witness" to the events, in comparison to the vase, which was dedicated in 812 CE, as we have already seen. One theme that both texts have in common is to identify the king of Yaxha as the antagonist, and each time he is mentioned on the stela, a subsidiary clause is introduced that reads *ahn-Ø K'inich Lakamtun,*—"he ran, K'inich Lakamtun"—providing a narrative motif that introduces satirical humor (Helmke 2019:41). Despite the many elements and events that are repeated

in both texts, that of Stela 12 represents a great deal of emendation to make it suitable for record on a public monument, including more succinct clauses, whereas the Komkom Vase preserves the almost raw details of the original codical annal from which it was most likely copied.

But what kind of narrative is that of the Komkom Vase? Does it reproduce the main themes and motifs that are documented on the public monuments of the eastern central lowlands, or is it vastly different? By examining the breakdown of the three main thematic fields of the narrative on the Komkom Vase, we can see that only about 11% pertain to calendrical records and 56% have to do with the actions and deeds of kings, leaving 33% to refer to war and martial encounters. Based on this breakdown it is clear that the calendrical mentions differ most significantly from the monumental record since these are very few on the vase and are at least four to five times more common on the monuments. The deeds of kings on the Komkom Vase may be a bit more inflated than what is otherwise seen on the monuments. The references to war on the vase are what most readily distinguishes the narrative since even a superficial perusal leaves the reader with the impression that this records one martial encounter after another. A third of the narrative is dedicated to war, which makes this an unprecedented record since at their peak (790 CE) only nine mentions to war are made, cumulatively, in the written record of the region and as many as six occur on this vase alone. Thus, combining the events cited on the vase to those known from the monumental record would completely change the picture for the region during this period, underlying the uniqueness of this one written source.

What is interesting is taking into account the 9.19.1.15.8 Long Count date that initiates the text on the Komkom Vase and that most probably records the production of the vase in 812 CE. Considering this date, the events recorded on the vase can be contrasted to the prevailing narrative themes in the monumental record of the region. Drawing this synchronic line across the distributional chart (Figure 7.6), we can see that 52% of events recorded in the monuments on that date refer to calendrical events, whereas the deeds of kings account for 40%, leaving war to represent only 8% of events. This makes the 33% of references to war on the Komkom Vase all the more significant and impressing to its readers and the dearth of calendrical events on the vase all the more noticeable. Based on this assessment, the vase appears to be wholly different in thematic emphasis from the monuments, a variation that is perhaps brought about by the distinct media and intended audiences. A possible ramification of this observation might be to conclude that references to wars on the vase are more representative of what actually transpired

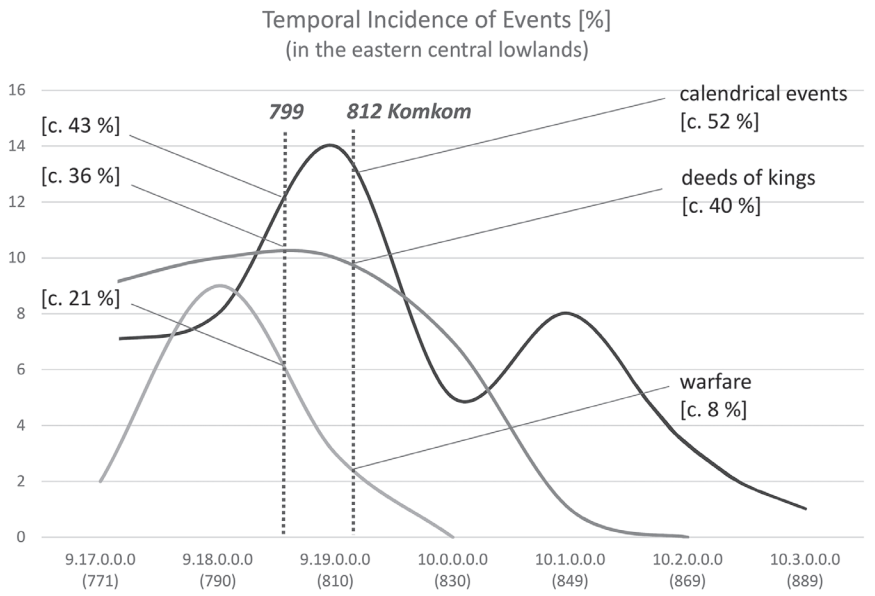


Figure 7.6. Diachronic distribution of narrative themes in the monumental record with synchronic references lines, marking the 799 CE events recorded on the Komkom Vase and the 812 dedication of the vase (chart by Christophe Helmke).

during this period. As such, there may have been more battles that actually took place than those known from the monumental record, following in line with the increasing deemphasis on armed conflicts during the latter facet of the Terminal Classic written record. The texts of monuments may therefore have emended history to such an extent that only select battles were reproduced in order to create a more terse (and official) plot versus the lengthier and more detailed storyline found on the vase.

Keeping in mind that the events recorded on the vase are not only retrospective but may very well be a copy of a source composed at an earlier date, we can consider the thematic distribution for 799 CE since the events related are from precisely that year (Figure 7.5). Here the distribution is remarkably different, with 43% of events relating to calendrical commemorations, 36% referring to the deeds of kings, and as many as 21% of references to war. At first sight, this may not be altogether too coincident, but the absolute incidences and relative proportions of "deeds of kings" versus "war" are identical for both the monumental record of the eastern central lowlands in 799 CE and for the narrative presented on the Komkom Vase. These points of congruity cannot be haphazard and reiterate that the thematic thrust and

nature of the glyphic text of the Komkom Vase are wholly contemporary to the events cited, although copied and reproduced several years later onto another medium. The greatest distinction between the media remains the overrepresentation of calendrical celebrations in the monumental record and its commensurate deemphasis on the Komkom Vase and, it is to be imagined, in the contemporaneous codical sources. As such, we can conclude that the text of the Komkom Vase, for all its detail and unique features, is wholly a product of its times and reflects in the same degree of exactitude as well as the same prevalent themes as those that were conveyed in other contemporaneous written sources.

Dénouement: The Komkom Vase in Context and the Abandonment of Baking Pot

As we have noted above, the Long Count date on the Komkom Vase dates its production to 812 CE. The extensive sampling of osteological materials from the peri-abandonment deposits in which the vase was found suggest that the deposit containing the Komkom Vase formed before 890 CE, as suggested by three solid ^{14}C dates based on human skeletal material (Helmke and Hoggarth 2018).[2] This potentially leaves the better part of four decades for the use-life of this vase from its "birth" to its final discard and "death" (Rice 2015:371–372). Although the dating of intervening episodes is hard to ascertain, the vase was undoubtedly used by the Komkom king for whom it was produced, possibly for a decade or more, until it was gifted to a king of Baking Pot (assuming that Baking Pot is not the Komkom cited in the glyphic corpus). The gifting of such finely decorated and polychromatic vessels is known from other specimens found throughout the Maya Lowlands, including ceramics from Naranjo gifted to Tikal, Holmul, Buenavista del Cayo, Xunantunich, Baking Pot, Hershey, Ucanal, and Sacul (Helmke and Awe 2012:75–80; Reents-Budet 1986; Tokovinine 2016:21–23), as well as ceramics from Motul de San José found at Tamarindito, Dos Pilas, and Altar de Sacrificios (Tokovinine 2016:23–25). This widespread distribution of royal ceramics is of note since we must recall that these were the personal effects of the kings who gifted these. As such, these are typically understood as objects that were gifted to subsidiary courts or vassals to cement alliances, although bridewealth, dowries, and more spontaneous gifts imparted as part of royal progresses stopping at hospitable royal courts should also be considered as viable mechanisms to account for the distribution of these ceramics.

Perhaps after the vase had entered the inventory of the royal court at

Baking Pot its rim was chipped. In an attempt to mend it, the uppermost edge of the ceramic was trimmed with a sharp tool—possibly an obsidian blade, to gauge by the small diagonal cut marks observable along the rim. This has resulted in the removal of the uppermost lip of the vase. Although this remedial action did recuperate some of the vase's overall appearance, it resulted in an uneven rim—not the finest repair for anyone actually using the vase and observing it up close. This is all the more surprising given that it may have been destined as a communal drinking vessel, passed around between revelers invited to partake in the fare of a royal feast. This observation is based on the volume of the vase, as interior measurements reveal that the vase could have contained as much as 3 liters of a fluid beverage. Presumably this is in excess of even a royal share, although excessive portions and conspicuous consumption are part and parcel of elite feasts the world over (Dietler and Hayden 2001; see also Trigger 1990).

Outside of the decorum of the royal court where the vase may have been used for a decade or so, it eventually met its end, through its disposal. The use and function of the vase ceased when it was smashed over a large area and scattered into an impressive peri-abandonment deposit accumulated at the base of Str. B7, principal entry to the royal palace of Baking Pot. This deposit is not only significant for its size, covering as much as 11 m^2 and a little over a cubic meter of volume, but also for the artifactual materials that constitute it. This large deposit was formed principally by ceramic vessels, including food processing and dozens of highly decorated serving vessels, especially cream-polychrome vases, dishes, tripods, and bowls, representing the whole array of ceramics that could be imagined in the inventory of a royal household. Also found were two small ceramic inkwells, ocarinas, and flute fragments in addition to chert lithics, obsidian blades, granite metate fragments, a fragmentary slate mace, and faunal remains including animal bone and worked shell, such as a Caribbean conch pendant, mother of pearl adornos of freshwater mussels (*Nephronais* sp.) as well as three perforated dwarf olive shells (*Olivella* sp.), and a carved jadeite pendant (Hoggarth, Awe, et al. 2016:255–256). Within the peri-abandonment deposit the skeletal remains of three human individuals were found, two complete and wholly articulated male individuals and one secondary interment (Hoggarth, Awe, et al. 2016:250–252). Faunal remains were also noted throughout the deposit, as were disarticulated human remains, including the cranium of a likely male individual. The quantity and diversity of materials and their quality imply that these materials were royal paraphernalia; given their context at the entrance to the royal palace, it seems likely that these represent the content

Dates Tables: Maya - Eastern Lowlands, pp 1 - 5

Books: Maya Kingship Rupture - Okoshi 2021, pp 125(146 / 473) - 129(150 / 473)

Table 7.3. Tabulation of dated events in the Eastern Central Lowlands (compiled by Christophe Helmke)

See: Dates Tables: CRC NAR XUN REJ TIK DPL, pp 1 - 5

Long Count	Tzolkin	Haab	Year	Date	Site[a]	Monument	Event
9.17.0.0.0	13 Ajaw	18 Kumku	771	Jan. 24	TIK	St. 19	Observations of the period ending and Twin Pyramid dedication
9.17.0.0.0	13 Ajaw	18 Kumku	771	Jan. 24	HRZ	St. 7	Eroded event
9.17.0.0.0	13 Ajaw	18 Kumku	771	Jan. 24	NKM	St. 3	Eroded event
9.17.0.2.12	13 Eb	5 Sip	771	Mar. 17	NAR	St. 14	Birth of "Itzamnaaj" K'awil
9.17.0.2.12	13 Eb	5 Sip	771	Mar. 17	NAR	St. 12	Birth of "Itzamnaaj" K'awil
9.17.4.4.10	9 Ok	3 Sotz'	775	Apr. 03	NAR	St. 13	Burning of Bital
9.17.5.8.12	9 Eb	0 Mol	776	Jun. 18	NAR	St. 19	Portrayal of "Flint Mouth"
9.17.5.8.12	9 Eb	0 Yaxk'in	776	Jun. 18	NAR	St. 19	Event depicted on front of stela
9.17.6.15.3	6 Ak'bal	6 K'ank'in	777	Oct. 22	NAR	St. 1	Another burning event
9.17.10.0.0	12 Ajaw	8 Pax	780	Dec. 02	NAR	St. 33	Portrayal of "Flint Mouth"
9.17.10.0.0	12 Ajaw	8 Pax	780	Dec. 02	NAR	St. 13	Celebration of a *lahuntun* and dancing event
9.17.10.0.0	12 Ajaw	8 Pax	780	Dec. 02	NAR	St. 19	Drop scattering event
9.17.10.0.0	12 Ajaw	8 Pax	780	Dec. 02	MLP	St. 7	Celebration of a *lahuntun* + additional events
9.17.13.4.3	5 Ak'bal	11 Pop	784	Feb. 08	NAR	St. 14	Accession of "Itzamnaaj" K'awil
9.17.13.4.4	6 K'an	12 Pop	784	Feb. 09	NAR	Museo del Radio	Unknown event after the accession
9.17.15.0.0	5 Ajaw	3 Muwan	785	Nov. 06	NAR	St. 6	Eroded event
9.17.18.6.1	10 Imix	4 Woj	789	Feb. 19	TIK	St. 19	1-*k'atun* accession anniversary of Yik'in Chan K'awiil
9.17.19.0.0	2 Ajaw	3 K'ank'in	789	Oct. 16	YXH	St. 13	Scattering rite by K'inich Lakamtun
9.17.19.9.1	1 Imix	19 Sotz'	790	Apr. 15	NAR	Alt. 2	Third striking of the ballplaying alley

(*continued*)

Table 7.3—*Continued*

Long Count	Tzolkin	Haab	Year	Date	Site[a]	Monument	Event
9.18.0.0.0	11 Ajaw	18 Mak	790	Oct. 11	NAR	St. 14	Celebration of the period ending
9.18.0.0.0	11 Ajaw	18 Mak	790	Oct. 11	TIK	St. 19	Dedication of Twin Pyramid complex
9.18.3.0.0	12 Ajaw	3 Mak	793	Sep. 25	YXH	St. 13	Scattering rite by K'inich Lakamtun
9.18.5.16.14	13 Hix	2 Sak	796	Aug. 14	YXH	St. 31	Capturing event and deity impersonation
9.18.7.0.0	9 Ajaw	13 Kej	797	Sep. 04	YXH	St. 13	Unknown 4-year celebration
9.18.8.3.9	9 Muluk	7 Muwan	798	Nov. 07	CRC	BCM3	Dynastic refounding by K'inich Joy K'awil
9.18.8.8.12	8 Eb	5 Woj	799	Feb. 18	NAR	St. 12	Burning of Sak Suutz'
9.18.8.8.16	12 Kib	9 Woj	799	Feb. 22	NAR	St. 12	Axing of Yaxha by "Itzamnaaj" K'awil
9.18.8.8.18	1 Etz'nab	11 Woj	799	Feb. 24	NAR	St. 12	Axing of Sak Kabniil
9.18.8.11.11	2 Chuwen	4 Sek	799	Apr. 18	NAR	St. 12	Eroded event
9.18.8.16.2	2 Ik'	15 Chen	799	Jul. 18	NAR	St. 12	Axing of Yaxha
9.18.9.0.13	1 Ben	6 Kej	799	Sep. 07	NAR	St. 12	Axing deity of Yaxha
9.18.9.0.13	1 Ben	6 Kej	799	Sep. 07	NAR	St. 35	Axing deity of Yaxha
9.18.9.5.9	6 Muluk	2 K'ayab	799	Dec. 12	CRC	BCM4	Accession of K'inich Joy K'awil
9.18.9.9.8	7 Lamat	16 Woj	800	Feb. 29	NAR	St. 12	The king of Yaxha is *na'waj yikaatz*
9.18.9.13.15	3 Men	3 Yaxk'in	800	May 26	NAR	St. 12	Palanquin and bundle events
9.18.9.14.3	11 Ak'bal	11 Yaxk'in	800	Jun. 03	NAR	St. 8	Front of stela
9.18.9.17.6	9 Kimi	14 Yax	800	Aug. 05	NAR	St. 32	Birth of Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil
9.18.10.0.0	10 Ajaw	8 Sak	800	Aug. 19	CRC	St. 11	Celebration of a *lahuntun*
9.18.10.0.0	10 Ajaw	8 Sak	800	Aug. 19	CRC	Alt. 23	Celebration of a *lahuntun* + presentation of captives

9.18.10.0.0	10 Ajaw	8 Sak	800	Aug. 19	NAR	St. 8	Eroded event
9.18.10.0.0	10 Ajaw	8 Sak	800	Aug. 19	NAR	St. 12	Celebration of a *lahuntun*
9.18.10.0.0	10 Ajaw	8 Sak	800	Aug. 19	NAR	St. 35	A fire ritual is conducted
9.18.10.0.0	10 Ajaw	8 Sak	800	Aug. 19	IXK	St. 5	The stone is set
9.18.10.0.0	10 Ajaw	8 Sak	800	Aug. 19	XUL	St. 21	Eroded event
9.18.12.10.14	8 Hix	7 Sip	803	Mar. 11	CRC	BCM4	Unknown event
9.18.13.3.13	6 Ben	6 K'ank'in	803	Oct. 16	NAR	St. 11	Burning of an unidentified place Kab . . .
9.18.13.10.19	9 Kawak	7 Sip	804	Mar. 10	CRC	Alt. 13	Accession of K'inich Tobil Yopaat
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	CRC	St. 8	Eroded event
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	CRC	St. 9	Eroded event
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	CRC	St. 18	The stone is set
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	CRC	Alt. 22	Presentation of captives
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	MCW	Alt. 2	Celebration of period ending
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	NAR	St.7	Celebration of period ending by "Itzamnaaj" K'awil
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	NAR	St. 10	Celebration of period ending by "Itzamnaaj" K'awil
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	TIK	St. 24	Observations of the period ending
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ajaw	18 Mol	810	Jun. 28	NKM	St. 5	Eroded event
9.19.0.3.0	4 Ajaw	18 Sak	810	Aug. 27	NAR	St. 7	Presentation of captives
9.19.0.3.0	4 Ajaw	18 Sak	810	Aug. 27	NAR	St. 10	Observations of the period ending
9.19.3.3.3	8 Ak'bal	6 Sak	813	Aug. 14	NAR	St. 32	Eroded event (death of "Itzamnaaj" K'awil?)
9.19.4.1.0	13 Ajaw	18 Mol	814	Jun. 27	NAR	St. 32	Pre-inaugural rite involving Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil

(*continued*)

Table 7.3—*Continued*

Long Count	Tzolkin	Haab	Year	Date	Site[a]	Monument	Event
9.19.4.1.1	1 Imix	19 Mol	814	Jun. 28	NAR	St. 32	Accession of Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil
9.19.4.15.1	8 Imix	14 Sotz'	815	Apr. 04	NAR	St. 32	Tribute presentations to Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil
9.19.5.0.0	2 Ajaw	13 Yaxk'in	815	Jun. 02	NKM	St. 1	Drop scattering event
9.19.5.9.12	12 Eb	5 K'ayab	815	Dec. 11	NAR	St. 32	Bestowal of a second gift
9.19.8.1.15	12 Men	13 Mol	817	Jun. 21	CRC	Alt. 12	Axing of Tikal
9.19.9.9.15	12 Men	8 Pax	819	Nov. 23	CRC	Alt. 12	Palanquin event involving Papamalil
9.19.9.15.0	13 Ajaw	8 Sip	820	Mar. 07	NAR	St. 32	Palanquin event involving Papamalil
9.19.9.17.0	1 Ajaw	8 Sek	820	Apr. 16	CRC	Alt. 12	*k'uhbaj* event
9.19.9.17.0	1 Ajaw	8 Sek	820	Apr. 16	CRC	St. 19	*k'uhbaj* event
9.19.10.0.0	8 Ajaw	8 Xul	820	May 06	CRC	St. 19	Event involving the paddler deities
9.19.10.0.0	8 Ajaw	8 Xul	820	May 06	CRC	Alt. 12	Drop scattering event involving K'inich Tobil Yopaat
9.19.10.0.0	8 Ajaw	8 Xul	820	May 06	CRC	Alt. 13	Unclear event
9.19.10.0.0	8 Ajaw	8 Xul	820	May 06	NAR	St. 32	Observations of the period ending
9.19.10.0.0	8 Ajaw	8 Xul	820	May 06	XUN	St. 8	Dance ceremony involving Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil
9.19.12.4.19	8 Kawak	17 Yax	822	Aug. 03	CRC	Alt. 13	Axing of Makalte' by K'inich Tobil Yopaat
10.0.0.0.0	7 Ajaw	18 Sip	830	Mar. 15	XUN	St. 9	Eroded event
10.0.0.0.0	7 Ajaw	18 Sip	830	Mar. 15	NAR	Alt. 1	Prognosticated date
10.0.0.0.0	7 Ajaw	18 Sip	830	Mar. 15	CRC	Alt. 13	Unspecified event
10.0.0.0.0	7 Ajaw	18 Sip	830	Mar. 15	XUL	St. 8	Eroded event
10.0.2.13.11	10 Chuwen	19 Pax	832	Nov. 30	MCW	Alt. 1	Arrival event

10.0.3.0.0	8 Ajaw	3 Sip	833	Feb. 27	MCW	Alt. 1	Date is witnessed
10.0.3.3.8	11 Lamat	11 Xul	833	May 06	XUL	St. 3	The new king is born
10.0.5.0.0	13 Ajaw	13 Woj	835	Feb. 17	MCW	Alt. 1	Unspecified event
10.0.10.0.0	6 Ajaw	8 Pop	840	Jan. 22	NKM	St. 5	Dancing event
10.0.18.1.17	11 Kaban	5 Pop	848	Jan. 17	CRC	St. 10	Dancing event (?)
10.0.19.4.11	9 Chuwen	14 Sip	849	Mar. 06	IXL	St. 1	Eroded event
10.0.19.6.14	13 Hix	17 Sek	849	Apr. 18	CRC	St. 17	Unclear event
10.0.19.6.14	13 Hix	17 Sek	849	Apr. 18	CRC	Alt. 10	Unspecified event
10.1.0.0.0	5 Ajaw	3 K'ayab	849	Nov. 30	CRC	St. 17	Drop scattering event involving the local patron deities
10.1.0.0.0	5 Ajaw	3 K'ayab	849	Nov. 30	CRC	Alt. 10	Eroded event
10.1.0.0.0	5 Ajaw	3 K'ayab	849	Nov. 30	XUN	St. 1	Unclear event
10.1.0.0.0	5 Ajaw	3 K'ayab	849	Nov. 30	XUN	Alt. 1	House dedication ritual (?)
10.1.0.0.0	5 Ajaw	3 K'ayab	849	Nov. 30	NKM	St. 2	Observations of the period ending
10.1.0.0.0	5 Ajaw	3 K'ayab	849	Nov. 30	UCN	St. 4	Drop scattering event
10.1.0.0.0	5 Ajaw	3 K'ayab	849	Nov. 30	XUL	St. 3	The stone is set
10.1.10.0.0	4 Ajaw	13 K'ank'in	859	Oct. 09	CRC	St. 10	Unspecified event
10.1.13.7.17	6 Kaban	10 Sip	863	Feb. 27	XUL	St. 10	Unclear event
10.2.0.0.0	3 Ajaw	3 Kej	869	Aug. 17	TIK	St. 11	The stela is erected
10.2.10.0.0	2 Ajaw	13 Chen	879	Jun. 26	IXL	Alt. 1	Celebration of a *lahuntun* in company
10.2.10.0.0	2 Ajaw	13 Chen	879	Jun. 26	JMB	St. 2	Drop scattering event
10.2.15.0.0	8 Ajaw	8 Mol	884	May 30	CRC	Alt. 26	Drop scattering event?
10.3.0.0.0	1 Ajaw	3 Yaxk'in	889	May 04	XUL	St. 10	Eroded event

[a] CRC, Caracol; HRZ, La Honradez; IXK, Ixkun; IXL, Ixlu; JMB, Jimbal; MCW, Mountain Cow; MLP, La Milpa; NAR, Naranjo; NKM, Nakum; TIK, Tikal; UCN, Ucanal; XUL, Xultun; XUN, Xunantunich; YXH, Yaxha.

of the royal household, redeposited at the front of the palace on the open plaza—in many ways, throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Similar peri-abandonment deposits are known from a series of sites in the central Maya Lowlands and appear to form either around the time of abandonment or shortly thereafter (e.g., Awe et al. 2020; A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a; Helmke 2006:182–183; Reents-Budet et al. 2000). The social processes responsible for the formation of these deposits remain the matter of debate, not the least since these have been interpreted in multiple ways. The deposit from Baking Pot, however, is distinctive for its extent, the inclusion of so many highly decorated polychromatic ceramics, and the human remains. Clearly the formation of these deposits represents singularly important and symbolically charged events to those responsible for their formation, although whether the motivations were primarily ritual, serving as termination offerings or motivated by the destruction of royal symbols of wealth and authority, remains an open question at present. Regardless, some time between 820 and 890 CE, these peri-abandonment deposits formed at Baking Pot, and there are no renewed signs of reoccupation of the royal palace and depopulation of the epicentral settlement begins in earnest at that time (Hoggarth 2012; Hoggarth et al. 2014).

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the editors of the volume for their kind invitation to contribute this chapter to their volume and for the congenial hospitality of Tsubasa Okoshi, who convened the conference in Kyoto, where an earlier version of this chapter was presented. ご親切に、ありがとうございました。

Notes

1. The same date also saw the erection of Stela 12 at Uaxactun bearing the name of Jasaw Chan K'awil II, although this falls outside of the present catchment area (see Schele and Grube 1995:204).

2. This is based on the ^{14}C dates but with the Komkom Vase serving as a terminus post quem date, thereby constraining the lower range of the dates. The resulting Bayesian chronological modeling corresponds to cal 812–890 CE, representing the most likely temporal interval for the formation of the deposits. To this we can add that another vase—found in another periabandonment deposit within the royal palace at Baking Pot—bearing the name of the last known ruler of Naranjo, Waxaklajun Ubah K'awil, which records the commemoration of both the 810 and 820 CE period endings (Helmke 2019:41, Figure 9b). As such, the formation of these deposits is likely to have occurred in the seven decades between 820 and 890 CE.

III

SOUTHERN LOWLANDS, SHIFTING SOCIETIES, AND ECONOMIES

8

Classic to Postclassic Maya Rulership

Changes in Military-Courtly Institutions

M. CHARLOTTE ARNAULD

Classic Maya sacred or divine kingship has been defined as a specific configuration of dynastic rule, graded status distinctions, and monumentality in civil-religious architecture (see Schwartz 2006:15). All three components were lost through various processes of change from 750 to 950/1050 CE. Even though later Postclassic regimes kept some appearance or degree of these components, they never reconfigured all three together. This chapter proposes to reformulate the demise of Maya kingship at the end of Classic times into research questions bearing on what changes occurred in political institutions at that time and later on. Referring particularly to rituals as the main expression of royal agency, including such religious and social rituals as monument production and erection, enthronement with war rituals, court etiquette, and diplomatic joint rituals, selected data sets are assembled to document transformations in institutions structuring military and courtly activities.[1]

Divine kings did not govern entirely by themselves (see Feeley-Harnik 1985). Official charges and institutions are needed in any political regime to sustain itself and function. Many Mayanists would agree that from Classic (250–950 CE) to Postclassic (950–1540) times, Maya rulership acquired differentiated political, ritual, and military functions (see D. Chase and A. Chase, Chapter 16, this volume). To validate this proposition, it is fruitful to examine whether the Late Terminal Classic (600–950 CE) dynamics involved experiments in institutional formation and transformation, and with what achievements and vulnerabilities. In this brief chapter I concentrate on the end of the Classic—that is, late 700s and 800s—in the southern lowlands from Edzna to the north to Copán to the south (see map [Figure 1.1] in Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume), with only glimpses of later institutions

and of Northern Lowland sequences. As proposed in the introduction to the volume, what is called the Classic Maya collapse must be seen as encompassing several stages: the rapid political collapse when many, if not most, royal dynasties fell in a few years (760–810 CE), which partly overlapped in time with a more gradual urban collapse when populations deserted the cities (during the ninth-tenth centuries CE), followed by a probable demographic collapse of the southern societies at the least (eleventh century). Different systems of causalities were involved in each stage, but droughts certainly played a determinant role during the urban and demographic collapses.

The archaeological diagnostics of an "institution" include a specific, repetitive architecture, variably articulated to private residential facilities, in association with particular images and written discourse portraying a corporate entity that acknowledged shared norms and established practices. Although it has not been investigated systematically, the repetition with variation of such diagnostic evidences in space and time would help us define distinct assemblages of polities in the southern lowland environment. The latter is otherwise difficult to define as a non-Empire, a super state, a coalescence of diverse supraregional entities, or theaters of hegemonies (Martin and Grube 1995). The political collapse of Classic southern regimes occurred on this wider scale, while also impacting the northern lowlands. Each city-state had limited political autonomy, not to say weak sovereignty, in the hierarchical order of kings akin to a "mimetic galaxy" in which geopolitics strongly affected the agency of elites (Graeber and Sahlins 2017a, following Tambiah; Grube 2000b; Smith 2011; Tokovinine 2013).

This chapter focuses on institutional change in the military and courtly organization of Classic Maya kingship at both the polity and geopolitical scales. Hierarchical interactions linking rulers and subordinate leaders (Martin and Grube 2008; Munson and Macri 2009) were constantly weaving the fabrics through which those actors developed strategies and institutions took shape and changed. As will be seen, the dynamics of those interactions necessarily entailed tension between both categories of royal and subroyal actors on several spatial scales. The first part of this chapter is devoted to defining some of the mechanisms locally and geopolitically responsible for this tension that must be assessed if we want to understand how the institutions functioned in the latest times. The second part concentrates on aspects and dynamics of military and court institutions in the late 700s and 800s CE in the southern lowlands.

Graded Status Distinctions and Dynastic Authority

As suggested in the introduction, the present volume definitely situates the research effort on the history of Classic Maya kingship rather than the long-term structures intrinsic to Maya religion and society (see Andrieu, Chapter 2, this volume). The history we deal with is that of the ancient Maya, not only the one they inscribed on their stone monuments and bark paper books but also the history enacted by Maya actors whose agency was embedded in social structures (following Inomata and Triadan 2009:59–60; Sahlins 1985). While hierarchical ties internally and externally structured politico-religious entities, they also guided actions. Themselves situated in an apex position within the kingdom they ruled, most Classic Maya kings, *ajaws,* were subordinated to "overlords," *kalo'mtes',* and *k'uhul ajaws* (Demarest 1992; Demarest et al. 2016:166–167; Martin and Grube 2000, 2008; Grube 2000b). Instead of a grand territorial pattern, this hierarchy of subordinated individuals literally mapped the kingdoms and their geopolitics, which were thus structured by many graded or ranked status distinctions above and below the king node. Those distinctions corresponded to "highly personal charts of affiliation" (Grube 2000b), not only to kinship positions and ties but also loyalty links and interpersonal obligations. As such, they were conceived of and perceived as different in nature from "bare" political coercion and economic exploitation as they bestowed changing values upon every single person throughout his or her lifetime. Some of those distinctions translated into variable politico-religious or military offices attached to rulership, a few of which are known to us in inscriptions, *bakab, sajal,* or *ajk'uhuun*—Sarah Jackson's "mild bureaucracy" (2005, 2013).

Acknowledgment of grades was formally operated through ceremonies, rituals, visits, and royal court displays and was duly recorded at least on public inscriptions carved in stone in search of a wide and eternal validation. Whereas kings and many nobles probably shared the *ajaw* title (due to its large semantic field), it seems that only the royal house had an emblem glyph recorded on public stone monuments and that access to such public written records on monuments was denied to subroyal nobles (Houston and Martin 2016:449); artists' signatures were an exception suggestive of some distinctive institutionalization of art production (Houston 2016; Inomata 2007b). In the northern lowlands, emblem glyphs were absent until late sacred kingship emerged at Ek Balam, Uxmal, Oxkintok, Koba, and Dzibilchaltun (see Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume), and similarly many northern Belize sites lack stone inscriptions in Classic societies apparently dominated by

nobility rather than sacred kings; an ambiguous case located in the intermediate central lowlands is the Río Bec sector (Lacadena García-Gallo et al. 2019). Warfare and possibly also ballgames must have been an ordinary way to challenge established ranks. It happened that defeated kings lost their ability to make public statements on monuments, in some cases personally, in others dynastically (see Grube, Chapter 3, this volume; A. Chase and D. Chase, Chapter 13, this volume).

A striking example of hierarchical links shaping polities and public places is offered by a comparison of the La Joyanca and Zapote Bobal sites (Figure 8.1). The former was arguably a larger, socially more structured settlement compared to the latter. Yet one of the Zapote Bobal rulers was a member of the Dos Pilas dynasty with high-rank origins in Tikal, and more than 40 monuments were erected locally in a short period of time, whereas La Joyanca had only one early stela acknowledging its subordination to a foreign Chan Ahk house (Arnauld et al. 2004; Fitzsimmons 2015). This example also points to the dynastic intrusions of "stranger kings" (Graeber and Sahlins 2017) in regions where they provoked long-term power imbalance (e.g., Houston 1993; the stranger king topic is dealt with by Andrieu, Chapter 2; and by Ringle et al., Chapter 14, in this volume).

Nikolai Grube signaled the tension inherent in the operation of hierarchical links existing above almost every kingdom: "the orthodoxy of divine kingship could thus be preserved though overlaid by a more pragmatic level in which rulers acknowledged their varying ranks" (2000b:552). On this "more pragmatic level," geopolitics combined ritual formalism and realpolitik, a tension that we analysts are too often tempted to minimize emphasizing one trend or the other (Tokovinine 2013:87; the "ideal/real" dichotomy of Andrieu, in Chapter 2, this volume). Less visible, the same tension noted by Grube on the geopolitical scale probably existed within the internal affairs of most kingdoms (as made clear by LeCount and Yaeger 2010:43). The ruler had to assert his rank over affiliated nobles who themselves had local ancestors and narratives of origins, yet were not as yet able to state them publicly. Whereas very little is known about the eventual "sumptuary laws" proclaimed by kings to restrict monumental residential architecture to their own families, clearly during the late 700s and 800s CE many subordinated nobles gained access to elaborate residences, along with the display of inscriptions and images on stone monuments (e.g., Tsukamoto and Esparza, Chapter 11, this volume; see also Ringle et al. 2020). By 780–830 CE many new centers started to erect one or two monuments (Ebert et al. 2014). This overall process of accrued noble protagonism has been labeled "proliferation

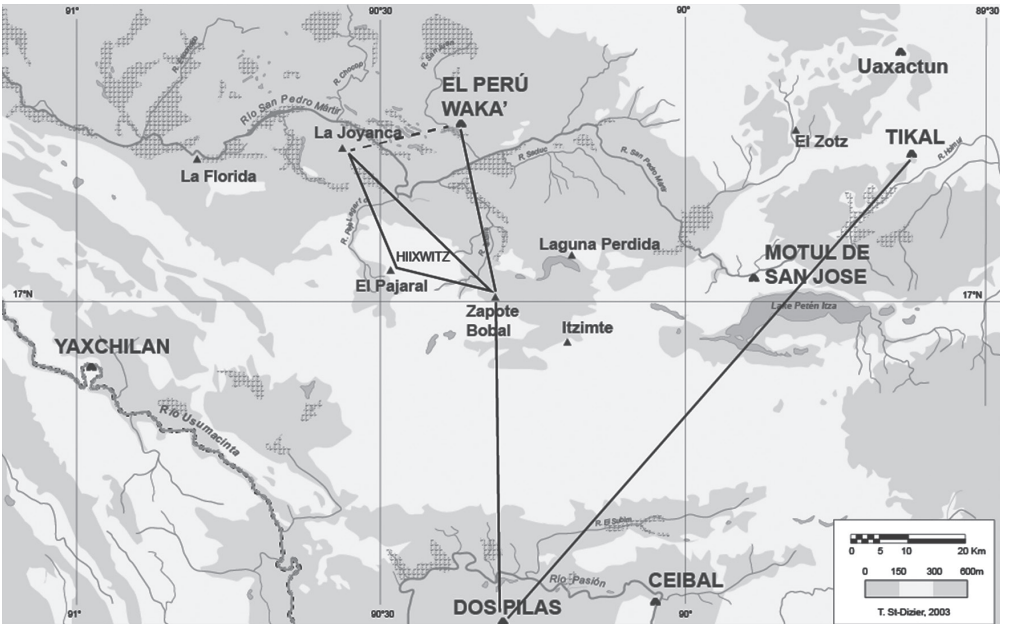


Figure 8.1. Locational map of La Joyanca and Zapote Bobal and its relation to Dos Pilas and Tikal. Hiix Witz is the name of the kingdom ruled by Zapote Bobal (image by the author).

of elites" by Demarest and colleagues (2016:167–169), a trend that reflects that rulers were weakening and losing control even though it may also have been part of royal strategies (Golden and Scherer 2013:412). In other words, the entire system of graded status distinctions and validation was changing, even collapsing, on several social and spatial scales. During the end of the Classic period (750–950 CE), the remarkable diversity in architectural and epigraphic expressions must be seen as both a symptom and an outcome of the deep change resulting from the agency of subroyal nobles who were "networking" and negotiating new positions beyond their ancestral locale.

However, "there is no history in this perspective, only incessant feuds and conflicts that nonetheless follow intricate rules and patterns that in the end ensure the permanence and indivisibility of the realm or the community" (Hansen and Stepputat 2006:298). Other structural mechanisms more susceptible of historic dynamics due to their distinct temporalities (Iannone 2002) must be explored to account for the political collapse. In the first place, the Maya themselves consciously recorded their history. A complex relation linking dynasties, places, and historicist schemes strained the hierarchical bonds that supported the "political association" (Smith 2011) of rulers and

nobility within and above their polities (see Helmke et al., Chapter 7, this volume). The corporate loyalty every group maintained to ancestral gods and origin place (McAnany 1995) sustained power and title transmission but did not necessarily specify institutionalized lines and modes of transmission (see Sharer and Golden 2004). Multiple strategies were open to ruling groups through marriage and fission—strategies particularly documented by the Tikal and Calakmul dynastic expansionist histories, as in the case of Dos Pilas evoked above (Houston 1993), but such strategies were also open to lower-rank houses. In this wide field of complex agency, however, historical and spatial continuity was built through repeated calendrical rituals that coordinated rulers and were proclaimed in duly public written form (Farriss 1995; Stuart 1996, 2010, 2011b, 2012). Dynastic authority was conceptually linked to the Long Count notational system, which enhanced remote mythical, divine origins, and constructed historical narratives with precisely reckoned chronology. Possibly both interconnected practices of calendric calculations and production-erection of inscribed stone monuments by written specialists were the most institutionalized activities in Classic kingdoms (Bricker et al. 2014; Saturno et al. 2017), in which only a very few nobles could take part considering the amount of knowledge required. Significantly, this activity did not disappear entirely during the Postclassic period, as indicated by plain painted stelae and codex books, but was heavily transformed and appropriated by oligarchies. Then "Calendar Round" and later "Katun Round" notation systems were adopted, favoring rotating transmission modes fit to aristocratic regimes in which noble houses shared power (e.g., Arnauld et al. 2018; D. Chase and A. Chase 2017; Demarest 1992; Farriss 1995). Shorter-term temporalities were then installed (Knowlton 2010).

Second, another source of agency that also introduced historical processes into the ritualized grand hierarchy derived from the number of affiliated people every ruler or noble was able to call up. This number translated into crops shared in feasting, and war parties facing enemies. Even though Classic Maya polities and their constituent houses were not territorially based, they were pragmatically dependent on the daily operation of a resident labor force. David Stuart (2005a) and Alexandre Tokovinine (2013) have insisted on the agricultural terms in which Classic kingly power was emically defined. Maya kingship was basically a political regime of forest horticulturists, which determined basic and changing mechanisms of control over people (Arnauld et al. 2017; Douglas et al. 2016; Lucero and Fash 2006; McAnany et al. 2016).

Third, as the introduction to this volume invites us to explore, the late Maya kingdom political economy must not be necessarily dichotomized into local land production as controlled by nobles against exotic luxury imports monopolized by kings (Helms 1993). More complex mercantilist trends resulted from the gradual integration of Maya southern lowland societies into the Mesoamerican interaction sphere during the Epiclassic period (from the eighth century at least). As an example, the Cancuen "rich royal capital" was a place where rulers and nobles entertained markedly new economic power relations (Andrieu et al. 2014; Demarest et al. 2014:192; Demarest, Chapter 18, this volume). We need to analyze similar, or differing, economic trends in other sites where the power balance appears to have changed drastically during the 700s and 800s (at Naachtun, see Nondédéo et al., Chapter 6, this volume; El Zotz, Houston 2008a; Motul de San José, Foias and Emery 2012; late El Perú-Waka, Navarro-Farr and Rich 2014; late Becan, Nondédéo et al. 2010; also Lamanai and coastal sites, Graham and Martin 2017). The relevance of the Cancuen case is not only its demonstration of long-distance trade networks but also its royal palace, which has been thoroughly analyzed and compared to local noble residences. Tomás Barrientos (2014; Chapter 10, this volume) shows that some nobles had at least gained access to depicted, if not written, forms of status proclamation placed above the doors of their rooms located inside the king's palace but visible from the rest of the city (see Demarest et al. 2014:207–208). This shows that internal hierarchical ties and power relations were changing under new pressing economic production-consumption modes.

In brief, the southern lowland system of ranked houses encompassed and shaped a fragmentary, supraregional state, crisscrossed by personal links reproduced through ritualist formalism yet reworked by consciously recorded histories of the deeds of ajaws, new economic mechanisms, and changing power balances. The hierarchical structure remained effective enough to allow analogous political processes of emancipation and power shifts to diffuse through space with amazing rapidity (Arnauld et al. 2017)—many dynastic collapses occurred during less than one generation by 790–810 CE (Bazy and Inomata 2017; Houston and Inomata 2009:288–319; see Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume; Grube, Chapter 3, this volume). Yet, if the shape of the network may account for rapidity, it does not explain the collapse. As shown above, a tension between kings and nobilities was exacerbated by mechanisms such as intrusive dynasties disrupting local hierarchies, royal monopoly on Long Count recording and its intellectual institutions, local rivalries in population

control, and new exchange modes in exotics. It appears that the first two types of mechanisms (displaced dynasties and calendars) enhanced the distance separating nobles from kings. In contrast, political economy mechanisms were maintaining local nobilities in the game, particularly in warfare. Increasing records of conflicts in written statements around 750–800 CE (Grube, Chapter 3, this volume) do not correlate with centralizing trends on the scale of the lowland kingdom hierarchy but rather reflect its fragmentation and disintegration, even though attempts at reorganization took place as early as 780 and until 849 at Ceibal (again see Beliaev 2000; Grube, Chapter 3, this volume; Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume; Tokovinine 2013). At the inner polity scale, the multifaceted evidence on warfare activity is more ambivalent, with variation in kingly authority upon noble warriors.

This brief overview of hierarchical structures and some of their late dynamics that involved emerging social configurations (calendar and ritual specialists, landed aristocracy, warriors, traders) lead us to focus on Classic military-courtly institutions, questioning the supposed royal monopoly on warfare and exploring the perhaps not so submissive role of subroyal actors in the field. Warfare and military institutions articulated most elitist activities, not only rituals and relations with gods but also royal court interaction, mobilization of commoners, and trade route control. On a deeper level, although this chapter does not pretend to solve the issue, the rapid (760–810 CE) political collapse would probably be better accounted for if we could understand how Maya sacred kingship was basically linked to a specific war-sacrifice ideology—an issue different from ascribing the causality to warfare (see discussion by Demarest, Chapter 18, this volume).

Royal Army and Court

The iconography of Late Classic polychrome vases depicts not only the clear emic perception of ranks in personal relations but also their material expression in tributes and taxes presented to the lord (e.g., McAnany 2010; Reents-Budet 2001). By the early 800s those images were replaced by a distinct iconography of *ajaw* warriors rendered by decorative techniques executed on fine wares evoking stone carving (Pabellon fine orange type and imitations produced in eastern Belize; Helmke and Reents-Budet 2008). In motives and support, this iconography bypassed the canonic image of the "king as a warrior." With abundant serpent symbolism, warrior imagery spread across the Maya Lowlands reflecting a turn in Maya societies, by then more widely connected to the rest of Mesoamerica than before and open to a new militaristic

ideology (Baudez 1994; Inomata and Triadan 2009:70–71; Rice 1989; Ringle 2004; Stuart 2012; Taube 1992a, 2000). Also taking into account changes in architecture, I now concentrate on evaluating whether the plausible kingly monopoly of warfare was challenged by nobles.

Norbert Elias's interpretation of the emergence in Western Europe of royal states in late medieval times builds upon the concept of a successful "taming" of the nobility by the king through military discipline and courtly life (1978, 1982, 1983; see also Bernbeck 2008). Elias relates social evolution not so much to individual action as to imbalances between distinct interdependent social groups opening margins of action for some well-placed actors (ideas later reworked by Pierre Bourdieu, e.g., 2012). Hence, taking advantage of a rising tension between the old warrior nobility and the officers of the royal bureaucracy, the kings of the eleventh to sixteenth centuries asserted their authority on the most dangerous "formation," the landed warrior aristocrats, by establishing a royal monopoly on taxes and warfare, along with enforcing military discipline. The royal court came to be the mechanism of authority by which the king tamed the nobility through imposing to individuals an etiquette and a co-residence at his palace away from their estates. Following this model, fiscal-military monopoly and courtship co-residence were simultaneously institutionalized by Western European kingships.

Certainly the European post-feudal, pre-Westphalian polities differed from Mesoamerican entities. Yet both categories shared an incipient territoriality and aspects of sacred kingship (e.g., Hansen and Stepputat 2006) embedded in "sociétés à maison" open to historical evolution (Lévi-Strauss 1982 [1979]).[2] As seen above, emerging social configurations were likely straining Late Classic Maya societies—calendar and ritual specialists, landed aristocracy, warriors, traders. Here, mainly in its aspects of military and court institutionalization, the Elias model may be tentatively applied to the Terminal Classic changes from southern to northern lowland kingdoms (Inomata and Houston 2001:14; Ringle et al. 2001:267).

Did Maya sacred kings succeed in "taming" their affiliated noble warriors by means of emerging, correlated institutions like "the royal court" and "the royal army"? If they did, we expect the archaeological evidence to include repetitive and standardized architecture devoted to both courtly life and military performance. Expected elements would include localized residences for courtiers as well as buildings for the formation and exhibition of disciplined soldiers, both located within or close to the royal palace, along with a specific iconography of uniformed, ranked warriors, and a particular ideology of warfare surrounding the king. Briefly summarized below, the evidence is

limited and confused in the southern lowland kingdoms, whereas it is more standardized and elaborate at Uxmal and Chichen Itza (Baudez and Latsanapoulos 2010; Inomata and Triadan 2009; Kowalski 2017; Ringle and Bey 2009). The Elias model can be applied positively to institutional changes difficult to interpret in the southern lowlands, yet well illustrated in the northern lowlands by the end of Classic times. But first, to avoid a reductionist translation of the Elias model from Western state formation to Classic Maya kingship, it is convenient to stress the strictly Mesoamerican "history" of an emerging royal military monopoly.[3]

The Maya concept of the sacred/divine king embodying war gods (like K'awiil), bearing titles such as "Fire-lord" (Stuart 2006:123–125) and imbued with unique powers of creation and destruction (*ch'ab ak'ab;* Stuart 2005a), must have made him a war chief par excellence. This would be confirmed by the iconography of rulers playing ballgame against rulers. The ritual of royal investiture at Wite' Naah, inspired from Teotihuacan and as such beginning by 378 CE, had introduced the practice of wars personally conducted by the newly enthroned king for the sacrifice of captives (Fash et al. 2009; Stuart 2000). Beyond references to territorial or social authority, widespread images and epigraphic mentions linking the king to a count of his captives probably also pointed to unique qualities he must have acquired through the grand ritual as "the sacrificer" (Figure 8.2; see Stuart's comment on Yaxchilan Lintel 25, 2005a; see also Baudez and Mathews 1985; Schele and Miller 1986:109–112).

A long tradition in the Maya area (and Mesoamerica; Boone 1984), warfare of capture for sacrifice would have been appropriated as a theatrical exhibition of royal exclusivity in certain accession rituals apart from but linked to other more obvious geopolitical functions (Scherer and Golden 2014). Generally "the theatrical roles of organizers, warriors, victims, and spectators defined and constructed the social order between the ruler, nobles, and commoners" (Inomata and Triadan 2009:80). Already present on the Leiden plaque, 320 CE, this specific iconography persisted through the 800s and thereafter, although with some late exceptions depicting associated nobles (e.g., Cancuen Panel 3 and Altar 2 dated to 796 and 790; see also Chase and Chase 2002:46 for Caracol; Scherer and Golden 2014 for Piedras Negras, Palenque, and Yaxchilan). An open issue is whether the Maya religion of sacred/divine kingship may have redefined an old tradition of capture warfare through appropriating certain Teotihuacan practices of sacrifice.

Also inspired from Teotihuacan, the notion of a royal army was plausibly introduced in the three-face iconography of an exceptional monument

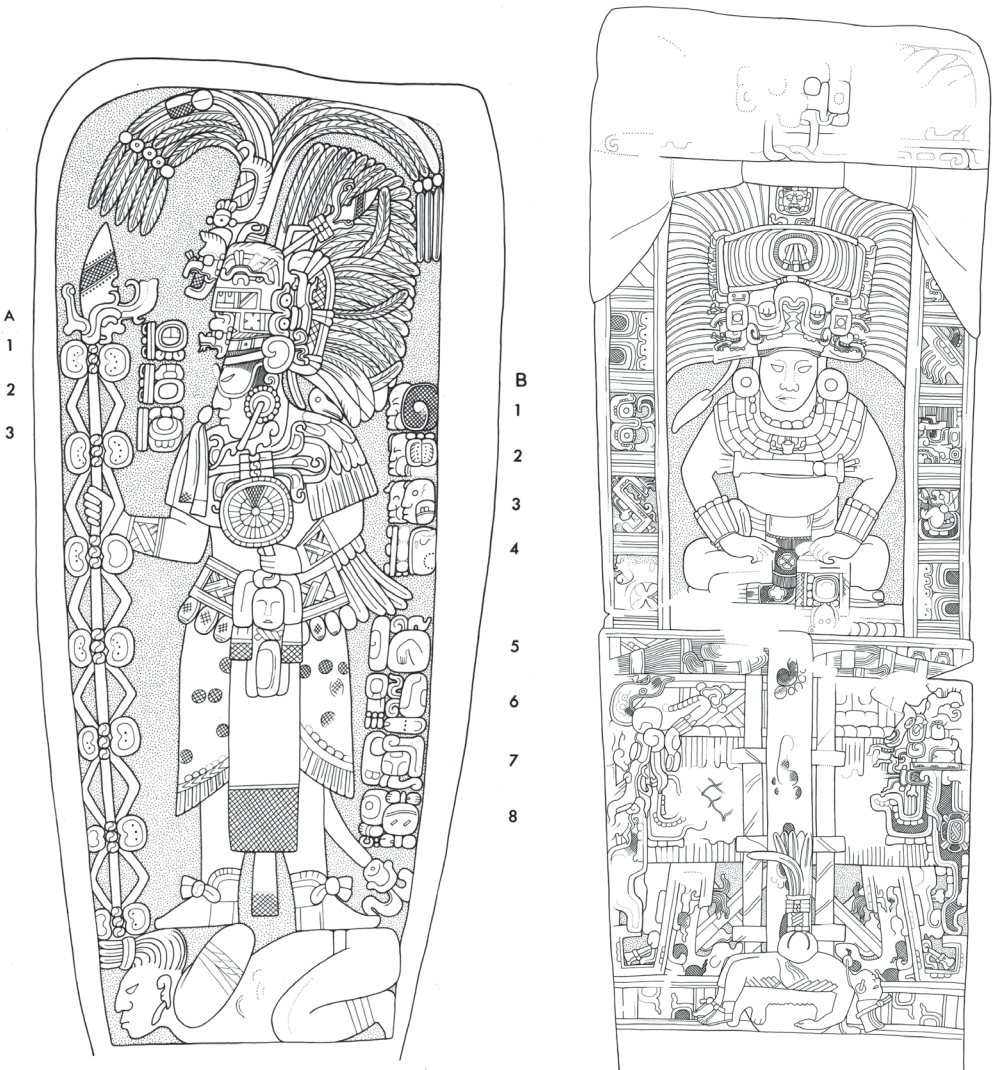


Figure 8.2. The king as the sacrificer. (*a*) Stela 8 of Naranjo, erected in 800 CE by "Itzam-naaj" K'awil, who waged several victorious wars; this image denotes the royal duty of taking war captives for sacrifice (drawing by Ian Graham; Graham and von Euw 2004:27, Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Peabody ID#PM2004.15.6.2.15 Digital File #99200111, © President and Fellows of Harvard College). (*b*) Stela 11 of Piedras Negras, 731 CE, one of several accession monuments at the site; this one elicits in space and time the accessing king (Ruler 4) as a sacrificer (drawing by David Stuart; Stuart and Graham 2003:57, Corpus of Maya Hieroglyphic Inscriptions, Peabody ID#PM2004.15.6.19.35 Digital File #99310205, © President and Fellows of Harvard College).

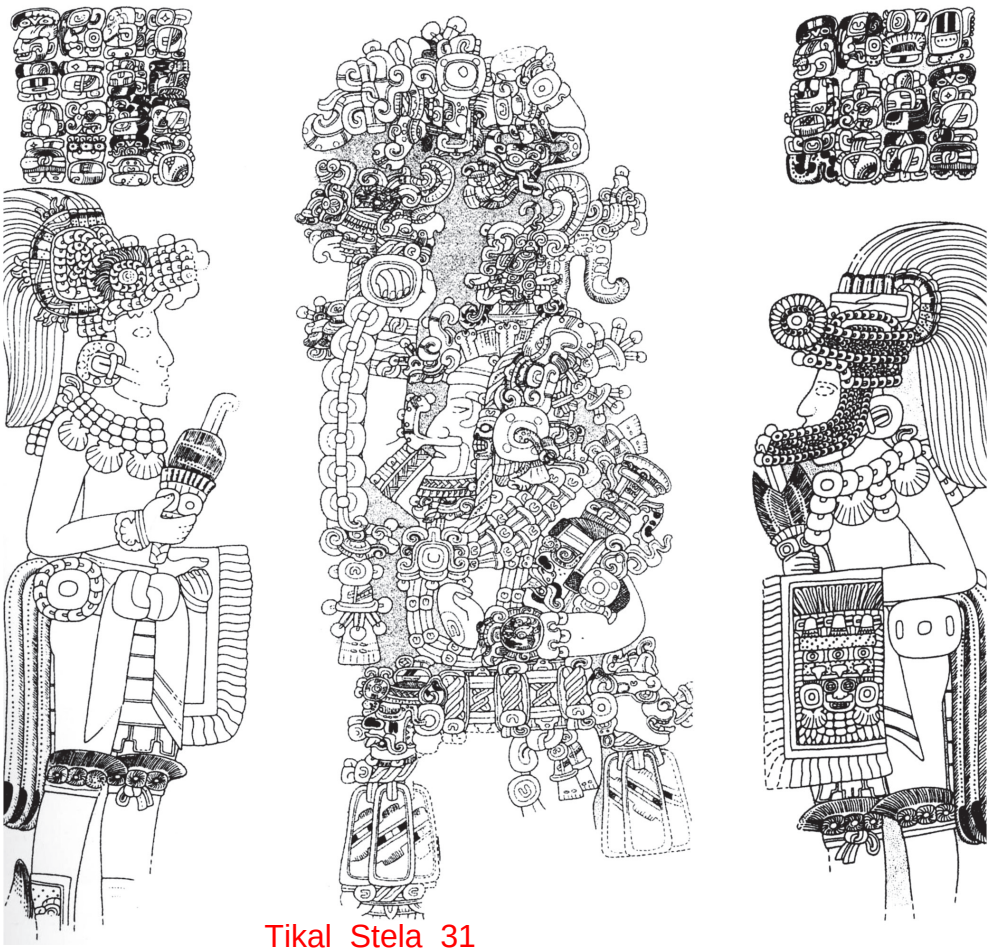


Figure 8.3. The front and sides of Stela 31 erected at Tikal in 445 CE, showing the king, Sihyaj Chan K'awiil, in the center flanked by two portraits of his father, Yax Nuun Ahiin, wearing the military uniform and gear of Teotihuacan warriors (Martin and Grube 2008:34–35) (drawing by William Coe, Jones and Satterthwaite 1982:Figure 51; Courtesy of the Penn Museum, Tikal Report 33a).

erected at Tikal in 445 CE, Stela 31 (Figure 8.3). Analyzed by several scholars, contemporary and later iconography of the "Maya king as a warrior" supports the hypothesis of the intrusion into Maya warfare traditions of a Teotihuacan "military" concept reflected in the repetition of a costume including weapons, insignia, and symbolic signs of sacrifice (e.g., Clancy 1999; Stone 1989; see also Bonnafoux et al. 2011; Cowgill 2015:197, Nondédéo, Lacadena García-Gallo, and Cases Martín 2019, Pasztory 1990). A military (state-sponsored; Hirth 1989) institution with strong religious bases was plausibly

emerging in the Maya southern lowlands, at least at Tikal. Furthermore, as recently revised by Stuart (2011b), the Stela 31 inscription appears to present a geopolitical program mentioning "28 kingdoms" or "provinces" (Tokovinine 2013:113–115). It has also been noted that the erection date is proximate to the opening of Baktun 9 (435 CE), which would indicate a Tikal ambition to maintain this geopolitical chart of control over the lowlands during the four hundred years spanning this ninth cycle. In turn, its end in 830 CE may have been anticipated by lower-rank kings as the end of the Tikal military expansion, or its attempts. Anticipation during the last *katuns* before 830 CE may have involved several groups of actors with divergent stakes (an anticipation effect is mentioned by Grube, Chapter 3, this volume; Arnauld et al. 2017:61). In fact, although it had disappeared from the records by the sixth century, the Teotihuacan military costume curiously reappeared during the 700s CE in several sites (Arnauld 1998; Stone 1989). By these times, well beyond Tikal some dynasties may have long experimented with the practices of a royal army (Piedras Negras, and Caracol; Chase and Chase 2002:35; also Dos Pilas and Aguateca; Figure 8.4). The eighth century was also the time when the effects of defeats and victories appear to have been deeper, if not destroying local dynasties then at least lowering their geopolitical rank and seriously affecting their capacity for monument erection and monumental construction (D. Chase and A. Chase 2017; Wahl et al. 2018). Such events were frequent in the Pasión-Petexbatun and Caracol-Naranjo-Tikal regions during the 700s and early 800s following the defeat of Calakmul by Tikal (695–736 CE), a turning point after which warfare tended to intensify, ultimately leading to the rapid political collapse (Demarest et al., eds. 2004; Martin and Grube 2008; see also Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume; Grube, Chapter 3, this volume).

If correct, this historical sequence provides us with important clues on the supraregional geopolitical scale. First, the religious concept of a state military monopoly was not proper to the Maya Lowlands but had been imported from Teotihuacan. Second, only a few hegemonic polities (Tikal, Calakmul, Caracol, Dos Pilas, Piedras Negras, Yaxchilan, and possibly Naranjo) had attempted to enforce such a concept on subordinate dynasties across the southern lowlands, with corresponding institutions. Third, the lower-rank entities who emulated (and resisted) those powerful polities present sparse and circumstantial rather than consistent iconographic and epigraphic evidence of militarization (Arnauld 1998; Demarest 2003:546; Lacadena García-Gallo 2008, 2010; Martin 2001; Stone 1989; Stuart 1993, 2005a). Fourth, frequency and intensity of conflicts during the Late Classic do suggest that

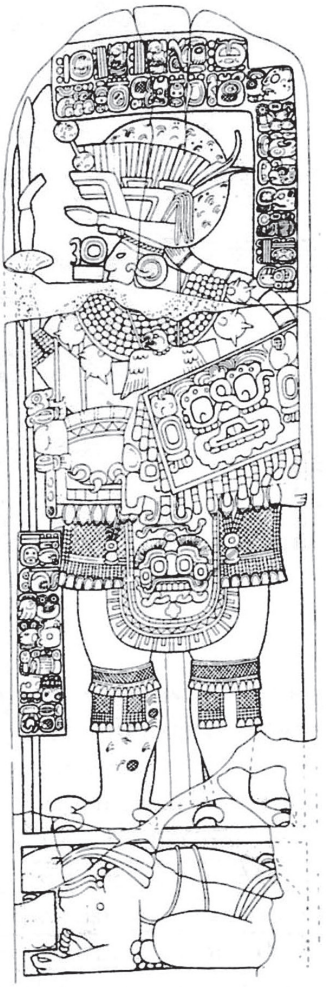
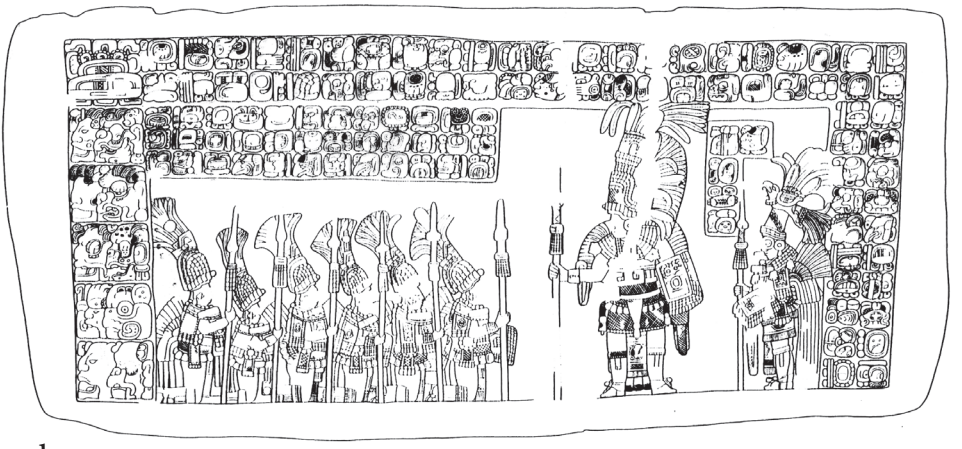


Figure 8.4. Royal military iconography referring to the Teotihuacan religious and military ideology; (*a*) Stela 2 of Aguateca, 735 CE; (*b*) Panel 2 of Piedras Negras, 658 and 667 CE, a scene in which the king confers a Teotihuacan war helmet to his successor and to young subject lords under the oversight of an *ochk'in kaloomte'* ([*a*] drawing by Ian Graham, Graham 1967:Figure 5, Courtesy of the Middle American Research Institute, Tulane University, Publication 33; [*b*] drawing by David Stuart, Courtesy of David Stuart).



many kings had agency in the process even though they were running the risk to locally empower their war captains (Scherer and Golden 2014). If the silence on war narratives after 810 CE can be interpreted as "a strategy of the remaining nobles to deny their responsibility for the global catastrophe" (Grube, Chapter 3, this volume), were the kings truly guilty? Schematizing, the available evidence suggests that at some point the nobles reacted to a warfare practice largely conducted by their rulers. As Elias invites us to do, this "point" in time should be detected through defining the role played not only by royal and subroyal elites but also by emerging "groups having specific interests," intellectuals and priests, and traders, who were also warriors (see Aoyama, Chapter 5, this volume). As mentioned, intellectuals were likely active in defining a moment of expectation and anticipation during the late Cycle 9 Katuns and traders in developing economic and ideological (including militaristic notions) interactions with non-Maya regions. During those *katuns,* warfare crystalized and accelerated sociopolitical change.

In this context at the polity scale, Elias also invites us to analyze the development of courtly architecture. There is an extreme variation in court architecture across the southern lowlands, and a scarcity of long halls with wide and complex stairways devoted to military activities and parades in royal palace compounds. However, a conspicuous presence of those long halls confirms true military activity in the Tikal and Piedras Negras palaces (also at Aguateca, and Ceibal, Arnauld 2001; see Aoyama, Chapter 5, this volume). In the lowlands to the northwest and north, a few very long halls were built late by potent rulers reflecting nascent military institutions at Comalcalco, Edzna, Dzibilchaltun, and Ek Balam (Figure 8.5; this is also discussed by Ringle et al., Chapter 14, Figure 14.2). They ultimately led to the creation of the wide colonnaded buildings with profuse military iconography known at Chichen Itza (Ringle 2009; Ringle and Bey 2009; Schmidt 2016) and later repeated at Mayapan in simplified form.

Classic courtly architecture also includes long buildings with many rooms arranged in one or two files situated at the entrance of epicentral palaces (Arnauld 2001; Barrientos 2014; Bey et al. 1997; Bey and May Ciau 2014). Many had direct access to the plaza and narrow access to the inner royal palace as if controlling or filtering the access. In fact, some were military open halls later divided into many rooms, but others were initially multiroom structures (e.g., at Nakum). Following Elias's principle of royal control on affiliates by means of their presence at the royal court, those buildings provided convenient, if uncomfortable, lodging capacities for nobles in close proximity to the ruler's family. Those modest rooms duplicated in a long file might

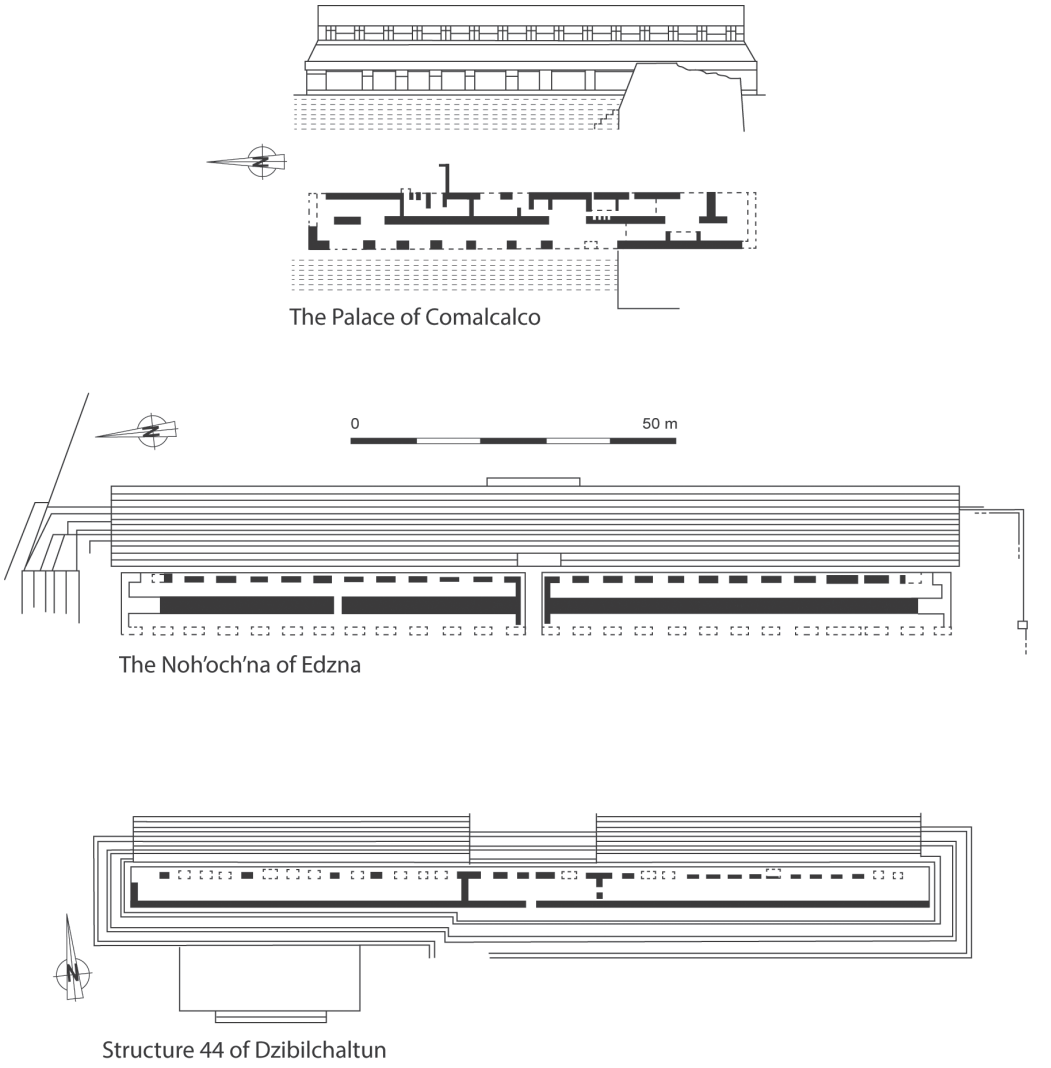


Figure 8.5. Long halls located in public spaces close to the royal palace at (*a*) Comalcalco (66 m long), (*b*) Edzna, the Noh'och'na (108 m long), and (*c*) Dzibilchaltun, Structure 44 (118 m long); all structures are dated to the early ninth century (redrawn by Sylvie Éliès, ArchAm, CNRS, [*a*] after Andrews 1989:Figure 54; [*b*] after Benavides Castillo 1997:Figure 14; [*c*] after Stuart et al. 1979; stairways are simplified).

have conveyed a sense of the royal authority imposed on nobility. Yet these rooms were more adapted to audience than real residence and were visible from the public plaza so that their residents were in a position to conduct direct interactions with the community, shortcutting the rulers' interests (see Barrientos, Chapter 10, in this volume). Thus, whereas discipline of courtiers through military activity required open halls located at the palace entrance for the (outward and inward) exhibition of forces (e.g., the Noh'och'na of Edzna, Figure 8.5), their daily presence at the royal palace required multiroom structures located within the epicentral palace in order to curtail direct noble–commoner interaction, or at least within closed compounds (e.g., Puuc quadrangles, Kowalski 2003; Ringle 2012). If exterior open halls were transformed into multiroom buildings, some degree of empowerment of local nobilities against the rulers would be expected (e.g., Arnauld et al. 2004:111–115). What we see is indeed variation since every Maya city had particular configurations and evolution. It remains that Tikal and Piedras Negras, possibly also the latest Cancuen palace (Barrientos 2014:Figure 12.5, 12.9, 12.10), and the Naachtun and Caracol epicentral palaces had royal architecture that efficiently combined military and court buildings, anticipating the late creation of the northern long halls and multiroom quadrangles at Puuc sites (in Chapter 14, Ringle et al. also discuss those building types in terms of court institutions with periodic residence).

Thus, except in high-rank hegemonic polities, the southern lowland institutional architecture does not point to a taming of subordinates by royal dynasties but rather suggests that the mounting power of noble houses threatened rulers. In contrast in the northern lowlands, a tradition of early-to-late Puuc corporate long buildings (as defined by Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume) seems to have inspired the creation of planned closed compounds with ballgames and long halls by late potent kings (but not dynasties) at Edzna, Dzibilchaltun, and Ek Balam as well as at Puuc Uxmal and Chichen Itza. Such northern combined trends reflect emerging new aristocratic regimes installed late during the ninth and tenth centuries and characterized by military orders supporting a renewed Central Mexican military ideology (e.g., Baudez and Latsanopoulos 2010; Ringle and Bey 2009).

Concluding Thoughts

Beyond his quite subtle interpretation of elite domestic architecture, Norbert Elias was able to use many more diverse and detailed documents than stone images and short inscriptions associated with politico-religious architecture.

If we Mayanists had equivalent datasets, we might assess more developed territoriality and military institutions in Classic rulership. As I summarized it, the Terminal Classic evidence on the inner polity scale points to trends by which the more the kings elaborated military and courtly institutions, the more their noble affiliates gained power for themselves (military open halls divided into multiroom courtly buildings, new nonroyal warrior imagery diffused). Sustainable political innovation seems to have arisen only where old traditions of corporate house authority had maintained sacred/divine kings within limits—that is, Becan, Río Bec, Edzna, and the Puuc places, among others.

To the south on the geopolitical scale, for almost four hundred years an emergent supraregional state (led by Tikal, Calakmul, and Caracol) achieved a degree of geopolitical and territorial expansion, experimenting with courtship and military institutions diversely enforced into peripheries by means of allied intrusive dynasties. A high number of those peripheral dynasties rapidly collapsed by 810–820 CE (e.g., Houston and Inomata 2009:295–304). To the north in the intermediate region, Becan, Río Bec, and Edzna present remarkable evidence of political innovation soon after the dynastic downfall of Calakmul (695–740 CE).

The failure of the hegemonic dynasties (the "old dynasties" of Grube, Chapter 3, this volume) is revealed by the very fact that the highest frequency of warfare records in written inscriptions (in the final 700s) did not result in their more centralized authority but instead opened new times of agency for subroyal nobles during the ninth century. In contrast, in the northern lowlands, the contemporaneous convergence of the "more consultative rulership" (Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume) with military institutions elaborated by a few charismatic rulers led to the formation of innovative militaristic regimes. Those rulers and their affiliates were interacting with Epiclassic non-Maya heirs of Teotihuacan, repeating the (mythical) pattern of the early Tikal history. While the southern dynasties were being destroyed, in the northern lowlands the other side of the history was transforming the Classic sacred kingship into Postclassic, aristocratic regimes that articulated hierarchical and military institutions differently. In turn, the latter process was interrupted or slowed down by the long, unfavorable climatic period spanning the years 1020 to 1150 CE (Douglas et al. 2016; Kennett et al. 2012), which strongly impacted the newly emerging societies in the northern and central (Peten lakes) lowlands. Those polities, however, survived into Late Postclassic times, and they transmitted something of the Classic political heritage.

Notes

1. Data sets used in the present study were compiled in the course of a research project in progress, coordinated by Valentina Vapnarsky and M. Charlotte Arnauld, that studies temporalities of rituals involved in Maya political decision making analyzed in archaeological, ethnographic, ethnolinguistic, and ethnohistoric perspectives (Arnauld et al. 2017, 2018; Vapnarsky 2017).

2. Houses were sociopolitical entities transitional between kinship and kingship; as such, they were open to historical evolution and flexible in terms of categories of affiliates (Arnauld, Michelet, and Nondédéo 2013; Gillespie 2000). Their power depended on the quality and quantity of those affiliates.

3. This part of the chapter is the result of a long-term research presented in several occasions and only partly published (Arnauld 1998, 2001, 2016, 2017). Initially I was inspired by the parallels I noted between accession rituals of highland Late Postclassic and lowland Late Classic Maya kings related to warfare and sacrifice, in both cases linked to early Central Mexican traditions.

9

Reconstructing an Ancient State from Its Bones, People, and Households

A Bioarchaeological Perspective on Late Classic Copán, Honduras

SHINTARO SUZUKI AND ANA LUISA IZQUIERDO

The objective of this volume is to put forth explanations and provide solid and valid arguments that offer alternative interpretations about the decline of Maya kingship, along with their sacred kings as the central axis of political might. Particularly, this book deals with the disappearance of governmental systems based on royal dynasties during the critical transition from the Late Classic to the Postclassic period between the eighth and tenth centuries CE (Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume).

This phenomenon has been extensively researched through the use of archaeology, epigraphy, iconography, and anthropology, resulting in a multitude of explanations for the Maya collapse (Demarest et al., Chapter 18; Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, both this volume) based on material remains, ancient writings, and different visions of the sociopolitical processes using anthropological models.

One of the fields that is now growing in the study of prehispanic Mesoamerica is bioarchaeology (Demarest 2009; Larsen 2015; Scherer 2017), which seeks to link the interactions of a biological organism and a social person in the context of any social process (Tiesler 2006). In this subfield of archaeology, theoretical questions are answered by studying the biological human remains. The osseous structure of bone is in a constant state of remodeling, thus providing vital data from the last decades of life. And the teeth enamel seals the subject's childhood experiences because of the lack of such constant metabolism. The research undertaken in bioarcheology permits the reconstruction of a subject's daily life as an individual; it can suggest

ethnic identities and even discover the processes of change in cultural traits over the course of time. The field has been in use in the Maya Lowlands for more than twenty years and, as a result, is able to bring new insights on broader questions about the presence of foreign people in the southern lowlands, such as Teotihuacan people in Peten, Guatemala (Izquierdo 2018a; Wright 2012).

This chapter broadens the main objective of the book through an alternative image drawn by bioarcheology on other political actors, particularly the secondary elites, who did not hold royal power but who constituted part of the political structure of the state and who had an impact in terms of ancient power networks (Demarest et al., Chapter 18, this volume). This chapter is based on several premises, the first being "a definite historical perspective focusing on what actions and strategies destroyed, yet also transformed, Maya Lowland polities and institutions" (Foias 2013). The second premise is the multicausality of the Maya collapse (see Grube, Chapter 3, this volume). There were some variants in the trajectories of demise of the Maya elites in every capital (e.g., Inomata, Chapter 4; Grube, Chapter 3; and Barrientos, Chapter 10, all this volume). There were catastrophic and destructive events, as in the case of Aguateca that is confirmed by archaeology (Inomata 2007a; Inomata and Triadan 2010; Inomata et al., 2017). At other sites like Tikal (Martin 2003:34; Martin and Grube 2008:80–83) and Copán (Fash 1991; Webster et al. 2000; Widmer and Storey 2016), the collapse was gradual and slow.

A third premise used in this chapter is that the Maya had sectorized cities in which the populations were grouped by clusters of communities that were different from one another (Canuto and Fash 2004; Marken et al. 2019). Residential clusters are clue to study its habitants (e.g., Haviland 1968; Welsh 1988), who have received a variety of different labels—"plaza groups" (Becker 1986, 1991), simply "groups" (Fash and Long 1983), "lineages" (Gillespie 2000), "corporative groups" (Gillespie 2000; Hendon 1991), "houses" (Gillespie, 2000), "neighborhoods or barrios" (Arnauld et al. 2012), or "moral communities" (Houston et al., 2003). But we use the most basic term, "household" (Blanton 1994; Flannery 1976), in order to avoid a possible association with a specific theory and to focus only on the empirical data.

The fourth premise that we use is that the household had its own internal management, ritual life, and funerary life (Gillespie 2000; Izquierdo 2018b), especially within its own specific residential clusters (Diamanti 1991; Hendon 1991, 2010). For this reason, each housing space provides political attributes to its inhabitants like ideological roots, identity, and presence from the state

where elites and non-elites gathered (Canuto and Fash 2004:49). According to Susan Gillespie (2000, 2011) "houses" were regarded as providing a group's legal personality as well as a certain amount of autonomy. A final consideration is that households formed social foundations that provided support for kingship. Sometimes households can tell alternative stories, such as one of strength or weakness that had the ability to produce crises in a political system: "the king rules the people, the clans rule the land" (Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume, citing John Beattie [1971]).

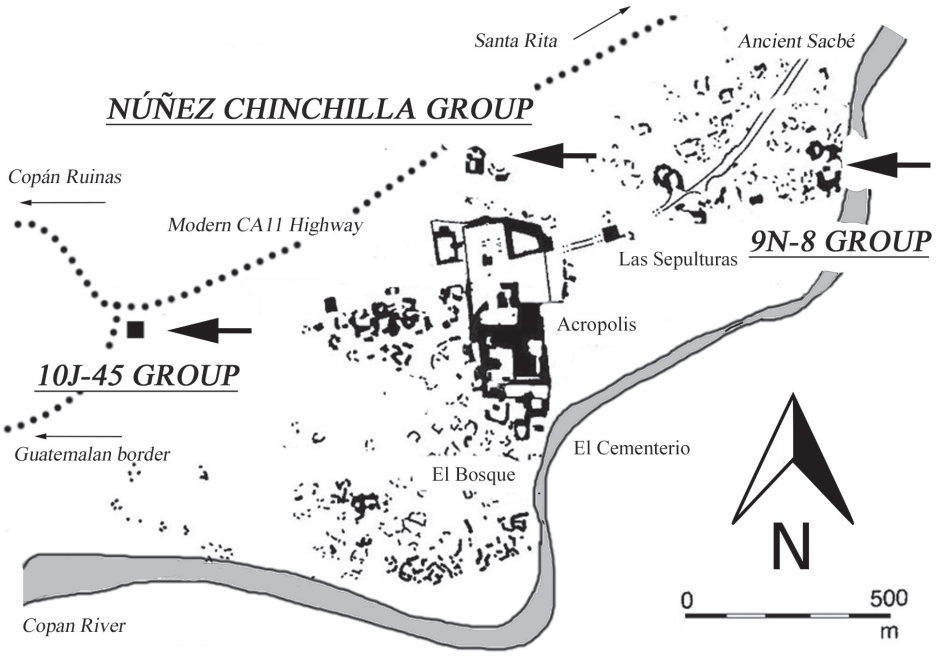
Sample

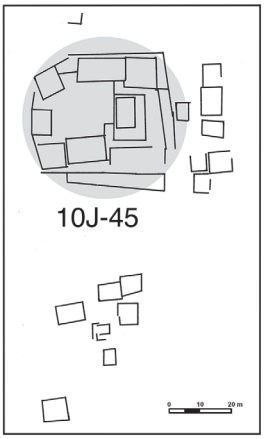
We focus on the Classic period (250–900 CE) at Copán, Honduras, one of the most studied Maya urban centers with a well-defined dynastic history. Our main corpus consists of a new set of burials from recent excavation in both Group 10J-45 and Group Núñez Chinchilla. Both architectural compounds were excavated by Seiichi Nakamura (2003, 2018; see also Suzuki et al. 2018). The individuals from Group 10J-45 roughly date to the later part of the Early Classic period (ca. 400–550) and those from the Núñez Chinchilla Group to the earlier part of the Late Classic (ca. 550–750). The Late Classic population was eventually compared and integrated with the broad data set from the Las Sepulturas urban neighborhood, especially from Group 9N-8, in order to gain a more complete picture of the population residing in the Late Classic urban core (Figures 9.1, 9.2, and Table 9.1). This last component of the sample is a well-known skeletal collection exhaustively studied by many scholars (e.g., Miller 2015), and there is an enormous amount of related literature (e.g., Diamanti 1991; Hendon 1991).

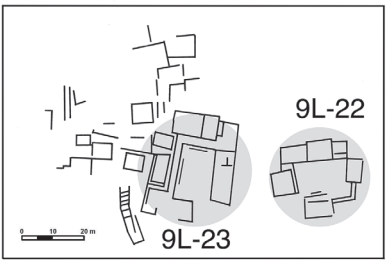
Archaeological Variables

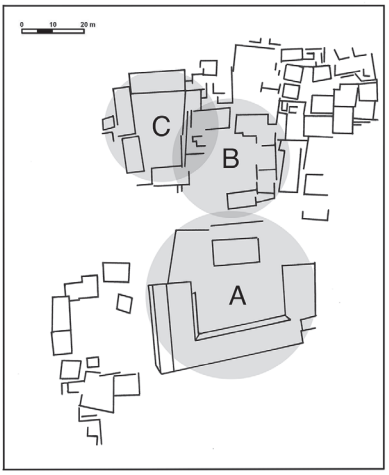
We use the residential clusters, architectural division, and social status as variables for understanding human remains within their archaeological contexts.

The residential clusters are a set of residential structures occupied by a single household whose members shared their daily activities. It is one of the main criteria used in addressing households in archaeology (Flannery 1976) and distinguishes one household from another according to its spatial limits and divisions. Although these concepts are applicable as long as the housing functions of the structures are well discussed and understood in archaeological terms, fortunately domestic archaeology has been one of the









Above: Figure 9.1. Ground plan from the urban core of Copán. Drawing by S. Suzuki.

Left: Figure 9.2. Maps of the three groups under study; *lower right*, Group 9N-8 (Las Sepulturas neighborhood; modified and redrawn from Fash 1991:154); *upper right*, Groups 9L-22 and 9L-23, or Núñez Chinchilla Group (modified and redrawn from Suzuki 2017:50, Proyecto Arqueológico Copán, PROARCO); and *left*, Group 10J-45 (modified and redrawn from Price et al. 2014:34, Programa Integral de Conservación del Patrimonio Arqueológico Copán, PICPAC). Shaded circles indicate architectural clusters considered as main dwellings in this study.

Table 9.1. Burial sample from Classic Copán, Honduras

Early Classic (10J-45 Group)						
71 individuals						
Female	Male	Not identifiable				
14 (5F+9F?)	19 (7M+12M?)	38				
Neonate	1–5	6–10	11–20	Young	Middle	Mature
0	11	1	1	8	5	0
Late Classic (Núñez Chinchilla Group)						
162 individuals						
Female	Male	Not identifiable				
31 (10F+21F?)	51 (16M+35M?)	80				
Neonate	1–5	6–10	11–20	Young	Middle	Mature
8	28	5	3	9	8	1
Late Classic (9N-8 Group)						
293 individuals						
Female	Male	Not identifiable				
56 (39F+17F?)	48 (32M+16M?)	189				
Neonate	1–5	6–10	11–20	Young	Middle	Mature
25	75	17	12	28	43	19

Basic life data (sex and age at death) was obtained by the means of established macroscopic osteology (White et al. 2011). It is worth mentioning that histomorphological approaches were applied partially (Suzuki and Tiesler 2016).

major focuses in our Copán case. The divisions of residential clusters are well defined in the Copán urban plan, and their architectural classification can be used to suggest the nature of the units as elite residences (types 3 and 4) versus commoner houses (types 1 and 2) (Fash and Long 1983; Willey and Leventhal 1979).

In order to take advantage of this situation at Copán, we not only use funerary traditions of the ancient Maya to make interpretations but also focus on architecture and location. Among the ancient Maya, the use of residential structures for funerary interment was common among both elite and nonelite groups (Hendon et al. 2014; McAnany 2013b). The place of burial is identified as the place of residence. Based on this, we can attribute a household membership to each individual, according to the associated structures. In this manner, we can link the empirical individual data to the social concept of the household.

The architectural division consists of an additional criterion developed to examine the internal configuration of residential clusters. According to

the literature, Maya residential clusters are commonly organized including "main dwellings" and other additional spaces with diverse functions distributed in adjacent areas (Manzanilla and Barba 1990). Based on this delineation, we were interested in observing the pattern of internal or spatial use of the residential clusters and evaluating the possible differences and similarities between the inhabitants from the "main dwelling" and the individuals associated with the "additional, or adjacent area."

In practical terms, the inhabitants of the main dwelling have a readily evident association with the structures of high architectural quality (construction material and height) that form closed and well-defined plazas. Meanwhile, the people who probably lived in the additional area were identified as the individuals related to the lower quality structures distributed in a dense or dispersed pattern throughout the surrounding areas without particular common spatial configurations.

Funerary treatment has been one of the most discussed topics in archaeology (Lull and Picazo 1989; Parker 1999), especially in the Maya area (Ruz 1991; Weiss-Krejci 2006). In the 1960s and 1970s, archaeologists, especially those dedicated to the New Archaeology, tried to determine the development of past societies in terms of funerary treatments under the premise that the intravitam "status" was reproduced "precisely" in the funerary treatments. However, in the last decades, the model was criticized in Post-Processual Archaeology. It has been argued that such a scheme is oversimplified by employing modern Western viewpoints and that the true dynamics of ancient societies could not be discussed under the universally forced application of an unilinear, neo-evolutionary model (see Hodder 1982; Parker 1999; Schiffer 1988).

In this complicated situation, Estella Weiss-Krejci examined a large sample of burials from the Maya area that reflected different ethnic identities expressed on different scales, and she managed to distinguish a set of status markers under a shared ideology of the Classic Maya (Krejci and Culbert 1995). Over the last decades these status markers have been constantly updated, covering more regions and chronological horizons (Tiesler 2014), and have been applied satisfactorily not only in the field of bioarchaeology (e.g., Price et al. 2014) but also in more traditional archaeology (Sharer and Traxler 2003). In this study, therefore, we first identify the status markers in each burial based on field notes, reports, drawings, and digital pictures and then assign a status score to all the individuals according to the standard system (Price et al. 2014:Table 1). An "artificial" score like this, naturally, does not exactly reproduce the social status of the ancient persona, but it surely

represents the gradual variation of social difference in the general sense of Classic Maya ideology.

Reconstruction of Biographies

Daily food consumption is a core part of the identity of human groups, and its internal variation often represents social differences. We evaluated the maximum stature (Steckel 2008), prevalence of caries (Hillson 2008), and wear of the posterior teeth through macroscopic observation (Molnar 1972). We also analyzed the isotopic properties of long bones through mass spectrometry (Katzenberg 2008). The maximum stature reflects the nutrition and health conditions during childhood. Dental caries and wear permit the interpretation of the subsistence strategies and preparation. Eventually macroscopic interpretations can be deepened through the isotopy.

Concerning lifestyle, the morphometric evaluation of human long bones allows the inference of repetitive physical activities that an individual carried out throughout his or her adult life (Ruff 2008). According to Wolff's law, when the muscles are developed by exerting a repetitive physical action in a particular direction, the underlying bone adapts to that load as an architectural support, modifying its morphology for resistance and swelling in the direction of the planes of movement. Any atrophied or paralyzed muscles result in "weakened" bones. This adaptive capacity of the skeletal architecture has enabled us to evaluate long bones as indicators of occupational patterns.

The biochemical study of migrations and human mobility in the past started in the 1990s, when archaeologists began to use the isotopes of several elements (Price and Burton 2011). Here we concentrate on strontium and oxygen. Previous studies in Mesoamerica have shown the great utility of this combination of elements because of their relationships to the marked divergence of underlying geology (see Price et al. 2008, 2010; Wright 2012, 2013).

General Interpretations

The personal life histories (daily diet, lifestyle, and migratory relations) of individuals were reconstructed from skeletal remains; these life histories sketched the population history according to their archaeological contexts (household clusters, architectural divisions, and social status expressed in funerary treatments). Through multiple statistical tests encompassing literally several hundred variables, we obtained the following interpretations, here briefly summarized in a historical perspective. Although all the raw data can

	Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4
Main Dwellings	51	29	9	3	0
Adjacent Areas	33	20	2	0	0

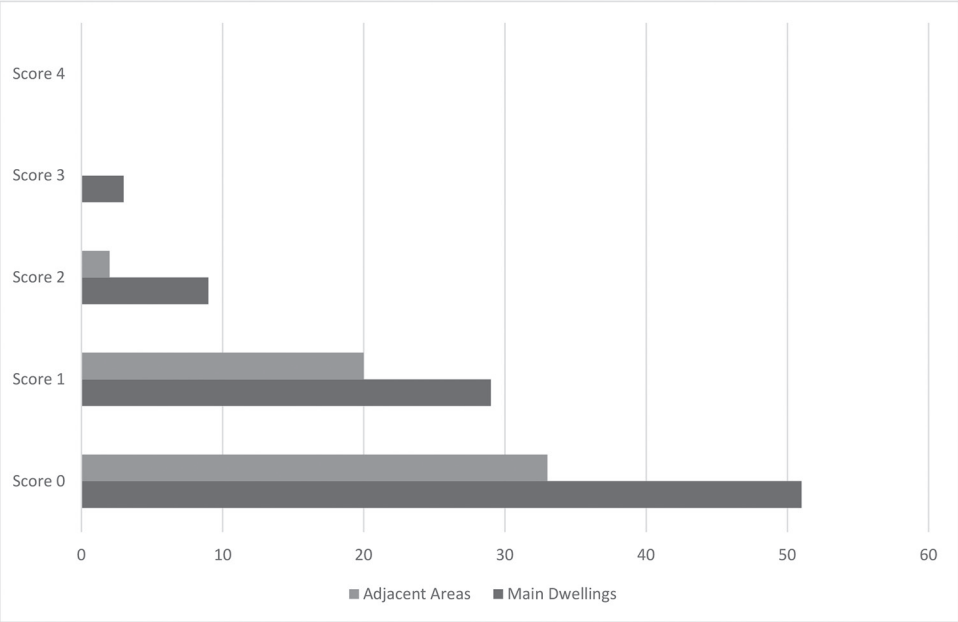


Figure 9.3. Conical distribution of status scores both in the main dwellings and in the adjacent areas from the Late Classic Núñez Chinchilla group.

be found in the dissertation by Shintaro Suzuki (2015), we also present our updated key results in this chapter.

The Copanecan households studied here through their member's bone remains and their residential clusters were multifamily entities. Each of the families had a conical structure, perhaps with a patrilinear axis, and lived in their respective areas, the main dwellings and adjacent houses (Figure 9.3). Members were bound not only by kinship relationships but also economic interactions of dependence. Osteologically, there are clear domestic profiles found in all the architectural divisions (see Table 9.1). And our joint analysis detected not only inter-households' variation but also internal variations within the same household. These variations also were evident in terms of funerary practices, daily diet (Tables 9.2 and 9.3), and lifestyle.

These bioarchaeological interpretations agree with what other authors have argued. For example, Stephen Houston and Takeshi Inomata (2009:49)

Table 9.2. One of the key results of dental caries prevalence from the Late Classic sample (Núñez Chinchilla group)

Main Dwellings Sample	Evaluated Teeth	Teeth with Caries	Chi Squared Test
Male = 30	594	89	Chi Square Score = 3.51, p = 0.06, D.F. = 1
Female = 17	236	48	
Adjacent Area Sample	**Evaluated Teeth**	**Teeth with Caries**	**Chi Squared Test**
Male = 14	247	30	Chi Square Score = 6.98, p = 0.00, D.F. = 1 1% Significance
Female = 9	118	27	

Sexual dimorphism is significant in the adjacent areas, suggesting the presence of sex-linked differences in daily foods habits (especially about subsistence) in the adjacent areas.

Table 9.3. One of the key results of comparisons of maximum stature in the Late Classic sample (Núñez Chinchilla and 9N-8 groups)

Male Sample	Average	St. Dev.	T Test
Núñez Chinchilla = 21	156.7	5.6	$t = 2.45$, $p = 0.02$, D.F. = 28
9N-8 = 9	161.8	3.4	5% Significance
Female Sample	**Average**	**St. Dev.**	**T Test**
Núñez Chinchilla = 10	144.6	7.1	$t = 0.89$, $p = 0.38$, D.F. = 16
9N-8 = 8	147.7	6.6	

The average of maximum stature of male individuals from the 9N-8 group is higher than that from the Núñez Chinchilla while there is no significant difference among female individuals. This suggests different diet patterns (especially about protein resource distribution) linked to sex and household.

have discussed the diverse morphology that the Classic Maya household units may have taken. In their work *The Classic Maya,* Houston and Inomata evaluated a wide selection of ethnohistorical and ethnolinguistic sources and suggested that the Maya household could have been everything from a simple nuclear family to a larger and more complex unit that included not only direct relatives and conjugal members but also their families and even servants and workers. For the case of Copán, we have additional archaeological information due to the meticulous study of the domestic archaeology of Group 9N-8 by Melissa Diamanti (1991:395–397). Diamanti identified the coexistence of two types of relationships in the organization of the same household. Apparently, there were individuals who cohabited based on kinship and those who lived together due to economic dependence. In addition,

she discussed an interesting pattern that existed in the internal spatial divisions of the residential clusters. In all likelihood, multiple families inhabited the same residential complex, sharing an identity but at the same time maintaining their respective economic autonomy. According to Diamanti's discussion, each of the architectural divisions constituted the home of two or three families.

Copán was actively involved in long-distance migratory movements (Buikstra et al. 2004). The immigrants came from throughout the Maya area. Long-distance migration was probably not limited to isolated events that occurred under some specific circumstance but was instead a general phenomenon (see Suzuki et al. 2018:Figures 8.4 and 8.5; also, Miller Wolf and Freiwald 2018). "Foreigners" or people from other areas were integrated into the local society through a domestic process that seems to have been both peaceful and varied. Some immigrants were enrolled into local households while others formed new households integrating local inhabitants. The process likely depended on factors such as social status, particular strategies, motives, and economic circumstances of each immigrant or group of immigrants.

Based on lithic studies, Arthur Demarest (2009:256) reached similar ideas. He discussed a multiregional system of economic integration that logically would have involved a broad cross-regional migration network. In addition, Takeshi Inomata (2004:189–190) has argued that migration was a common occurrence among prehispanic Maya cities, especially in terms of non-elite people. Inomata based his interpretations on a large ethnohistoric corpus and on archaeological data derived from his excavations at Aguateca, Guatemala.

We have observed variations in funerary practices within the household as well as in daily diet and lifestyle within the household cluster, the architectural division, and even between osteological sex.

A sex-based division of daily labors and activities is evident in Classic Copán (Table 9.4). Furthermore, we can suggest that there were a series of specialized activities that were distributed not only according to sex but also spatially and architecturally (Table 9.5). In addition, the degree of sexual division and specialization was apparently homogeneous neither throughout the period nor among the residential clusters.

These interpretations should be contrasted with discussions from other authors. John Clark and Stephen Houston (2008:36,40) offered an excellent anthropological review about the sexual division among the Yucatec Maya from the colonial period. The authors went through an extensive array of

Table 9.4. One of the key results of long bone morphology from the Classic Copán sample (10J-45 group, Núñez Chinchilla group and 9N-8 group)

Sample	Average	St. Dev.	T Test
Left Humeral Min./Max.			
Male = 45	74.1	6.1	
Female = 44	72.8	6.5	
			$t = 0.96$, $p = 0.33$, D.F. = 87
Right Humeral Min./Max.			
Male = 48	73.3	5.4	
Female = 36	70.6	6.1	
			$t = 2.11$, $p = 0.03$, D.F. = 82
			5% Significance
Femoral Midshaft AP/ML			
Male = 81	108.0	9.0	
Female=70	101.1	7.7	
			$t = 4.98$, $p = 0.00$, D.F. = 149
			1% Significance

Sexual dimorphism is evident, suggesting a strong sexual division of daily labors and activities.

ethnolinguistic sources and argued for a strong sex-based division of the daily works, even being able to suggest the possible range of the tasks distributed specifically according to sex and social sectors. Houston and Inomata (2009:53) subsequently examined such sexual division in the archaeological material culture and explained how it was rooted in prehispanic times. In the specific case of Copán, the topic was approached by Andrea Gerstle (1988), Melissa Diamanti (1991), Julia Hendon (2010), and Randolph Widmer (2009); based on their extensive excavations at Las Sepulturas, all of them reached the same conclusions that we present above.

Specific Interpretations for the Late Classic period

We offer the following interpretations specifically tied to the Late Classic period. These are based on a more detailed diachronic comparison between the Early Classic Group 10J-45, the Late Classic group Núñez Chinchilla, and Group 9N-8 at Las Sepulturas.

The Copanecan households from the Late Classic urban core were varied, and each probably had developed its own strategies and policies. At least throughout Late Classic times, the main dwellings and the adjacent houses consisted of well-identified households. Although they shared a collective

Table 9.5. One of the key results of long bone morphology from the Late Classic Copán sample (Núñez Chinchilla group and 9N-8 group)

Male Sample	Average	St. Dev.	T Test
Left Humeral Min./Max.			
Main Dwelling = 12	73.2	4.1	
Adjacent Area = 29	74.1	6.6	
			$t = 0.42$, $p = 0.67$, D.F. = 39
Right Humeral Min./Max.			
Main Dwelling = 19	72.4	3.9	
Adjacent Area = 25	75.7	6.6	
			$t = 2.02$, $p = 0.05$, D.F. = 40 (Welch) 5% Significance
Femoral Midshaft AP/ML			
Main Dwelling = 30	109.4	10.6	
Adjacent Area = 40	106.2	6.7	
			$t = 1.42$, $p = 0.16$, D.F. = 45.8 (Welch)
Female Sample	Average	St. Dev.	T Test
Left Humeral Min./Max.			
Main Dwelling = 16	73.8	5.0	
Adjacent Area = 23	72.3	7.1	
			$t = 0.71$, $p = 0.48$, D.F. = 37
Right Humeral Min./Max.			
Main Dwelling = 10	71.1	5.0	
Adjacent Area = 21	73.1	7.5	
			$t = 0.74$, $p = 0.46$, D.F. = 29
Femoral Midshaft AP/ML			
Main Dwelling = 20	99.8	8.6	
Adjacent Area = 41	101.1	7.2	
			$t = 0.61$, $p = 0.54$, D.F. = 59

There is a significant morphological difference of the right humeri in the male individuals, suggesting their different daily activities, especially relating to the right arm usage, from the main dwellings to the adjacent areas.

identity, there was a hierarchical relationship. The preference or superiority of the main dwellings over the smaller units was marked.

Immigration to Copán from the western region of the current Honduran territory was a common occurrence. Indeed, Honduran immigrants were "preferred" by the Copanecan society in terms of their funerary treatments, which suggests that at least some kind of social change had occurred between the Early Classic and the Late Classic in the regional interactions around Copán.

There was an organized specialization on the scale of the Copanecan state. Among the remains from the Late Classic urban habitants, large labor forces designed toward massive food production were not observed. If such forces existed, they should have resulted in robust skeletons, similar to those of the Early Classic. However, this was not observed, meaning that other households must have existed that fostered and sustained the sedentary life of the urban core households. These food-producing households must have been located in other sections of the Copán valley and probably also in its hinterlands.

Yet specialization was well developed on the domestic scale. Differences regarding daily activities were observed in association with the architectural divisions and the osteological sex. The residents of the main dwellings, both male and female, apparently spent a lot of time inside their residences. The men were homogeneously engaged in some sedentary task, perhaps the management of their own household group. The women seem to have been freed from the usual domestic labor of food processing. Thus, there was significant morphological diversity regarding architectural divisions and sex. This was practically common throughout the different residential clusters along the urban core. On the other hand, a high diversity of daily activities was detected in the additional or adjacent areas. Their inhabitants, especially the males, did not share a homogeneous task but were rather dedicated to various activities, possibly including specialized craft production that was based on the decisions made in the main dwellings.

Conclusions

Human beings can talk to us through their remains. These "private" voices that bioarcheology deciphers from burials in ancient residential units, such as the 10J-45 Group and the Núñez Chinchilla Group, recount daily diet, lifestyle, and geological origins, providing additional data for interpretation. In other words, bioarcheology provides data regarding qualitative and typological changes of the lives of the Copanecan people.

Sacred kingship at Copán began with K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', allegedly of foreign origin and the bearer of Maya and Teotihuacan traditions (Bell et al. 2004). He is seen as coming from somewhere in the Peten, possibly Caracol (Helmke et al. 2019; Price et al. 2010). Written texts present the king as a cultural hero but do not provide direct clues about the strategies used by K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' to unify the Copanecan people, instead focusing on

the ideological promotion of sacred Maya entities and the extensive public work that K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo' undertook (Kupprat 2015).

The localization of residential units and their architectural development still formed the focus of corporate needs, resulting from the internal dynamics of the residents. Important decisions were apparently made according to moral guidelines (Marken and Fitzsimmons 2015:15). Households were semiautonomous depending on their hierarchical and "ethnic" (Maya) composition (Izquierdo 2018b:19). It was also true, however, that households had jurisdictional restraints; they were limited in matters governed by the state, like public works, military defense, and, more specifically, religious-political partnerships. Moreover, every household was subject to the state dynastic apparatus. Political power was centralized in terms of what can be called the local Maya state, reducing the autonomy of households and helping to create a network of heterarchical political units (Marken and Fitzsimmons 2015:7).

Heterarchy seems accentuated during the dynastic period, especially since some households were strengthened through emulation and alliance with the sovereign, such as the royal house composing Group 9N-8(Diamanti 1991:65). The nature of political power should have mutated throughout Copán's history, and each political regime (Barrientos, Chapter 10, this volume) had distinctive traits in each epoch (see Reed and Zeleznik 2016). The disappearance of sacred kingship was simply another of these transformations. By the end of the Late Classic period, high inhabitant density at Copán must have helped to debilitate the Copán state. Given the advances of authority and autonomy seen in each household at the end of the Classic period, the Copán state became less sustainable, finally losing the last of its sacred lords. Even though the dynastic collapse broke Copán as a Maya royal state, obsidian dating has been used to suggest that a considerable population was present at the site until 950–1000 CE and that the demographic decline was postponed until one or two centuries later (Freter and Abrams 2016; Webster et al. 2000).

In conclusion, we have widened and deepened dynamic political research through focusing on ancient household clusters and, through examining their osteological remains, on the individuals who lived there. They were other actors entangled in the political world of the *k'uhul ajaw.* Through understanding these secondary figures we can gain a better understanding about the Classic Maya collapse at Copán.

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10

Palatial Architecture and Political Order in the Maya Lowlands at the End of the Eighth Century

TOMÁS BARRIENTOS Q.

When approaching the subject of explaining ancient civilizations' sociopolitical organization, as this volume does, it is important to keep in mind the complexity of this matter. Throughout the development of archaeological research, scholars have generated theoretical models in order to understand the ways in which power was exercised in past societies.

In the case of Classic Lowland Maya civilization, the growing availability of both archaeological and epigraphic data has allowed a constant revision of models that have tried to clarify the nature of political institutions and their processes of transformation. The transition from the Classic to Postclassic periods during the tenth century CE has drawn special attention because it was the moment of the most dramatic transformation in sociopolitical institutions in Maya history, thus representing a particularly important time period for these kinds of studies.

Nevertheless, as is shown in this chapter, this process of transformation began as early as the mid-eighth century, when sites in the central and northern Maya Lowlands began to display certain characteristics reflecting a wide range of variations in their political institutions. One of these is the appearance of monumental palatial complexes whose architectural features evidence early manifestations of what later became Postclassic political institutions.

The following analysis of late eighth century palatial architecture is presented through the specific case of Cancuen's regal palace, which constitutes one of the best examples of this type of monumental acropolis. In sum, this chapter approaches the matter of Classic to Postclassic Maya transformations

through the spatial analysis of palatial architecture based on the premise that the built environment constitutes a material expression of sociopolitical structures.

An Approach to Sociopolitical Structures: From Systems to Regimes

In the development of Maya archaeology, sociopolitical models have tended to be static and based on a single perspective when trying to explain Classic period political institutions, ignoring the chronological and geographic variations presented at each site. It has become clear that as more evidence is recovered, these models fit less cleanly with the data. Also, most of these models have been derived from studies in other parts of the world, and now Mayanists feel more secure in developing their own explanations based on local data. As a result, the most important advancement in the development of Classic Lowland Maya sociopolitical models is the acknowledgment that the exercise of power has always been dynamic and highly variable through time and space (see Andrieu, Chapter 2, this volume).

In addition, it is important to apply the concepts of system and regime in order to understand Classic Lowland Maya sociopolitical organization and transformation. Based on structural theories, a political system is defined as

> the particular form of social structure or a set of social structures related to economic, political, kinship or ideological patterns, that have the power of collective agency, which have direct effects over the individuals. (Barrientos 2014:149–150)

These systems are expressed by the existence of institutions, which can be defined as "the forms of organized action, laws, customs, procedures, routines, norms and conventions that operate at the collective and individual levels" (Barrientos 2014:150–152).

Given that sociopolitical systems can embrace large populations and many settlements, especially if they share a common ideology, it is proposed that Classic Lowland Maya cities were part of a system centered on the institution of sacred kingship and its rules of legitimation, represented mostly by the use of the *k'uhul ajaw* royal title. However, even when different centers operated within the same system, there were different variants, as evidenced by the absence of the *k'uhul ajaw* title in some centers, or the use of alternative ones such as the *k'uhul sak wahyis* title among the members of the Kaanul dynasty sphere and their close allies (Canuto and Barrientos, 2020).

Given this institutional diversity, the application of the term "regime" has been proposed as a tool to describe and understand the Classic Lowland Maya geopolitical landscape (Canuto and Lamoureux-St-Hilaire 2017). From this point of view, regimes were the "political communities" that rose as local manifestations of the "practice of governance" framed by the more general patterns of the political system and its institutions. As is discussed below, the variations in Maya palatial architecture during the late eighth century constitute one of the most reliable forms of archaeological evidence for the existence of different political regimes. In the case of Cancuen, its political regime was in a process of transformation before its sudden collapse and abandonment.

Architecture and Sociopolitical Structures

In order to study the processes of transformation in Classic Lowland Maya centers, there are different lines of archaeological and epigraphic evidence that can be focused on. One of these is monumental and public architecture, which here is defined as a material manifestation of political regimes. Public architecture can also be approached from the concept of the built environment,

> a dynamic set of signs and meanings that communicated messages . . . and served as social stages that shaped, organized, predicted and restricted human action through the division and delimitation of physical space, creating and reinforcing social hierarchies and power strategies. (Barrientos 2014:151–152)

Contrary to other types of material expressions of political regimes, architecture has a relatively higher permanence, thus giving access to the symbolic messages and sociocultural rules, conventions, and statements reflecting the choices of designers and builders (Locock 1994:5). As for the case of Lowland Maya palatial architecture, diachronic study should then reflect how political processes changed through time, including transformations to later Postclassic regimes.

Classic Maya Regal Palaces

Although the term "palace" has been associated with the official residence of a state chief, Maya palaces developed into multifunctional buildings and became the main material expression of political power at the end of the

Classic period, just when small independent sites like Cancuen proliferated in the political landscape of the central lowlands (Barrientos 2014:325–331).

A comparative diachronic analysis among Maya palaces has shown important variations in their design and function, suggesting a progressive development that began during the Early Classic period (250–600 CE) and reached its apogee during the latter half of the Late Classic (750–850 CE) (Barrientos 2014:241–248; Ciudad Ruíz 2001:308; Inomata and Houston 2001:5; Webster 2001:144). In addition, given that there is almost no evidence for the existence of formal palaces during the Preclassic period, it is suggested that the appearance of palaces during the Early Classic was not derived from private royal residences (Runggaldier 2009). Instead, palatial complexes were created as a separate institution located in public places that mediated the social relations between the ruler and the population (Barrientos 2014:245). According to Arlen Chase and Diane Chase (2006a:57–58), the development of an administrative focus in Maya centers happened in the Early Classic period, something that seems to correlate with the appearance of the first monumental palaces in the fifth and sixth centuries CE, at sites such as Uaxactun, Tikal, Calakmul, Piedras Negras, and Caracol (Ciudad Ruíz 2001; Marcus 1993:166; Valdés 2001).

During the Late Classic period, regal palaces grew in size and complexity. In larger centers, these were developed as the product of successive construction efforts by the ruling dynasties. As David Webster (2001:59) points out, "Such aggregations were not the result of any sort of master plan involving predetermined final forms. . . . [There is an] extraordinary variety displayed by individual buildings that presumably had the same purposes." For that reason, the interpretation of monumental palatial complexes relies on detailed chronological reconstructions that allow the identification of contemporary buildings within the same architectural context. Only then can we go further with synchronic functional interpretations of their different spatial units.

After the abandonment of sites in the central lowlands, palatial constructions continued well into the Postclassic period, showing that the concept of the palace evolved into different forms that were adapted to new sociopolitical regimes (see Arnauld, Chapter 8; Ringle et al., Chapter 14; D. Chase and A. Chase, Chapter 16, all this volume).

Nevertheless, despite their temporality or geographic location, all Classic Maya palace complexes show common characteristics, making it possible to define some general statements:

1. The palace became an institution, reflecting the nature of each site's political regime. Therefore, variability in their architectural characteristics represents the "contextual variants" of sociopolitical institutions such as the *k'uhul ajaw.* In other words, the individuality of each palace reflects the particularities of the "regime" present at each site.
2. Palaces gradually became the main focus of architectural investment, representing some of the largest and most elaborated, complex, and monumental buildings in Maya history.
3. The exterior and interior areas of palaces functioned as active spaces for political action, which included a wide range of diplomatic, ritual, economic, and residential activities. Some of these areas served for more than one type of activity.
4. There is an advantage of analyzing short-lived palaces because they represent a particular stage in time, thus giving an opportunity of performing a synchronic study of Maya sociopolitical structures. Such is the case of the palatial complex at Cancuen.
5. Palace complexes comprise different types of buildings that can be classified according to their morphological and functional characteristics. The most common are passage-gateway structures, presentation throne rooms, and royal residences. The first type corresponds to the long, multiroomed buildings also known as "long houses." They were mainly located in the perimeter of basal platforms and had large staircases, functioning as visual and spatial "filters" that separated public from private spaces. Presentation throne rooms were single-chambered buildings located in visible areas of interior courtyards, usually with benches in their interior, designed for the appearance of the ruler and other members of the royal court. Finally, royal residences were built around private patios, which were reserved for the ruler's immediate family. Some of these residences have been archaeologically identified at sites like Tikal (Harrison 2003), Copán (Andrews and Bill 2005), and Aguateca (Inomata et al. 2001).

The Palace Complex of Cancuen

The site of Cancuen was a port city situated in a peninsula on the Pasión River, Guatemala. Its location is in the area that separates the Maya Highlands and

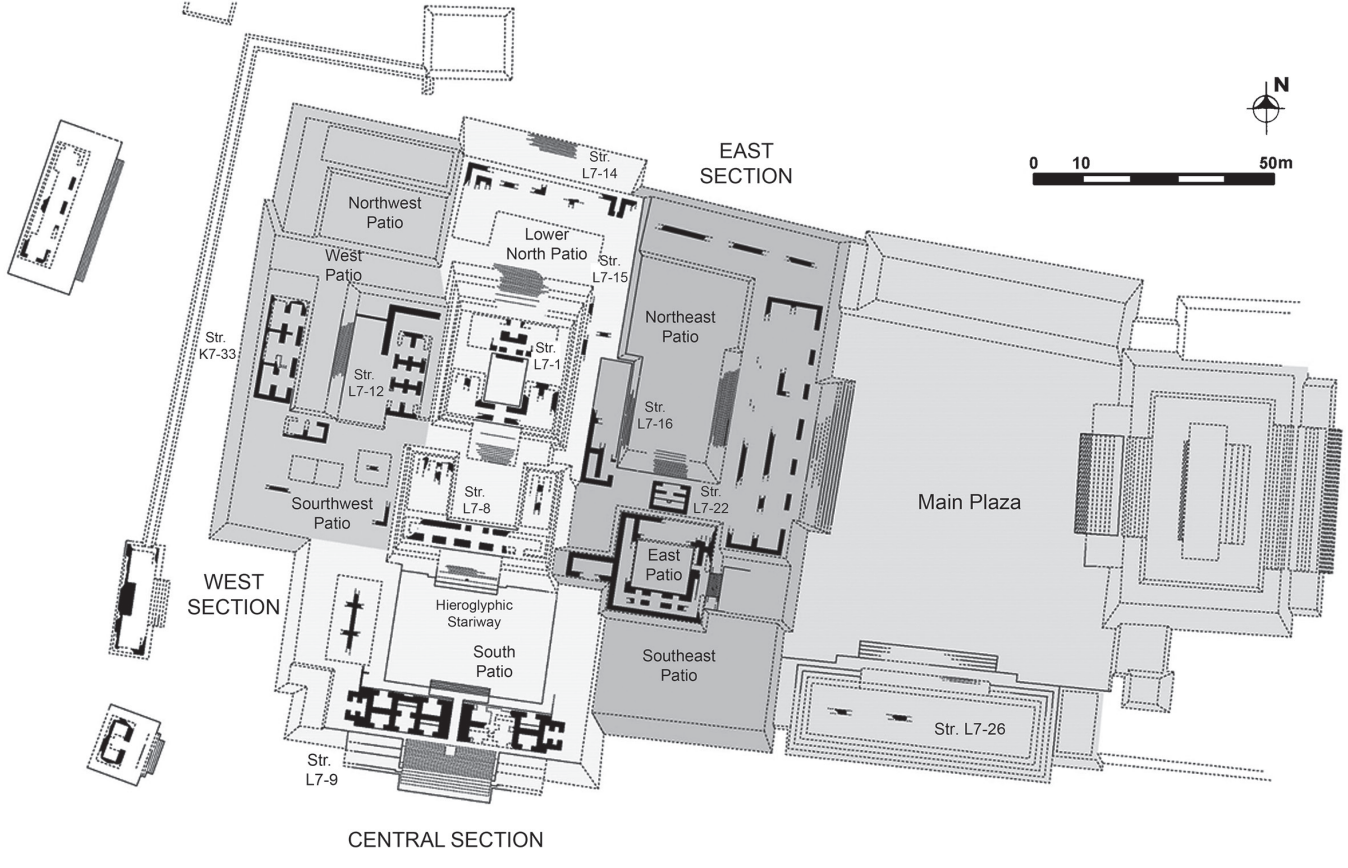


Figure 10.1. Plan of Cancuen's palatial complex, showing its four spatial sections, patios, and structures (Map by Tomás Barrientos and Luis Fernando Luin, VCAP).

Lowlands, which was strategic for the communication and trade routes once controlled by the major sites in both areas. The epicenter of the site covers ca. 3 km^2, set in an elevated and well-drained area. The monumentality of the regal palace dwarfs the rest of the public architecture, making it highly visible from every direction. Elite and non-elite residences, along with minor public architecture, were located to the north and northeast of the epicenter, occupying a landscape filled with creeks and small hills (Figure 10.1).

The regal palace constitutes an acropolis-type building that covers an approximate area of 32,000 m^2 (235 × 135 m), making it almost the same size as the Central Acropolis of Tikal and one of the largest palatial complexes in the Maya region. Its basal platform supports 23 individual structures of different sizes, grouped in 11 courtyards. Some individual buildings reach 50 m in length and have 6 to 8 m high facades. The highest courtyard sits 11.35 m above the plaza floor, meaning that the entire Acropolis could have had a total height of 17 m (Figure 10.2).

Given the importance of the palace at Cancuen, its excavation became one of the main research objectives of the Vanderbilt Cancuen Archaeological Project since the beginning of the project (Demarest et al. 2012). Between 1999 and 2012, 555 excavation units were completed in the palace perimeter, covering a total of 2,200 m^2, comprising 7% of its entire area. Another 103 units were excavated in its surrounding areas, and further investigations have continued in recent years.

After this extensive research program, the chronology of the palace complex has been defined with a high level of accuracy, based not only on architectural sequences but also correlated with epigraphic data and the detailed ceramic sequence defined by the project (Forné et al. 2011) (Table 10.1).

This chronology begins with the first version of the Acropolis, dated around 650 CE, when Cancuen was founded under the auspices of Kaanul ruler Yuhkno'm Ch'een, as part of his geopolitical strategy to control the entire Maya Lowlands region through a "royal road" that connected the main cities of the western lowlands (Canuto and Barrientos 2013). The first acropolis was of modest size, composed of low platforms made with clay fill and covered with lime plaster.

The palace was modified in a second episode during the mid-eighth century, when the Kaanul hegemony fell and the site of Dos Pilas took control of the southwestern lowlands. Although we know little about this second version of the palace, it remained a modest size. During this time, Cancuen became an important and strategic ally to Dos Pilas, evidenced by the marriage between Ruler 3 and a woman from Cancuen.

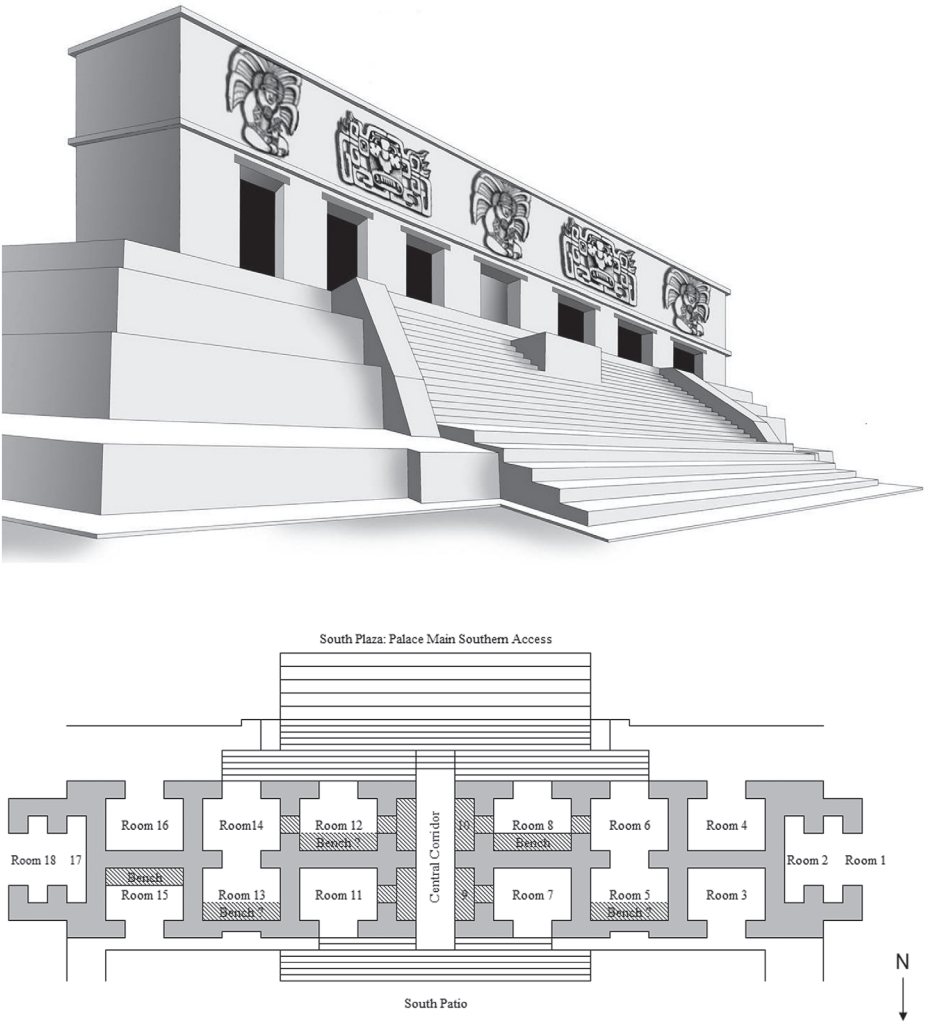


Figure 10.2. Hypothetical reconstruction of Structure L7-9 south facade (Illustration by Luis Fernando Luin, VCAP) and plan of Structure L7-9 indicating added benches and blocked doorways (Drawing by Tomás Barrientos).

The destruction of Dos Pilas in 761 CE brought important political changes in the Upper Pasión River region, including the rise of small independent sites like Cancuen. At this time the Acropolis was transformed into a monumental complex under the reign of ruler Tajal Chan Ahk, reflecting the new role of Cancuen as a regional capital. The dedication of a hieroglyphic staircase in one of the palace's interior courtyards has provided a date of 786 CE for this episode. In the following decades, many minor modifications

Table 10.1. Cancuen's chronology, including the palace's construction episodes

	Ceramic	Historic		Palace Architecture
		Cancuen	Other Sites	
650	CONCORDIA		Calakmul Hegemony	
655		*K'iib' ajaw*		Episode I
660				
665				
670				
675		Chan Ahk Wi' Taak Kay		
680				
685				Episode II
690				
695			Dos Pilas hegemony	
700				
705				
710				
715				
720		Lady G1-K'awiil		
725				
730				
735				
740				
745				
750				
755	LOS LAURELES	Tajal Chan Ahk		Episode III
760				
765				Episode IV
770				
775	EARLY		Domination over Machaquila	
780				
785	CHAMAN			Episode V
790	LATE			
795				
800	CHAMAN	Kan Ma'ax		Episode VI

Source: Table by Tomás Barrientos Q.

were added to all its buildings until the final construction episode sometime around 800 CE. Given that the site suffered a sudden abandonment and the assassination of the entire royal court, this last phase was left unfinished.

These chronological interpretations thus link the rise of Cancuen as an independent polity with the construction of the monumental Acropolis. With this in mind, it has been possible to carry out a synchronic spatial analysis of its architectural remains as a means to understand the regime under the reign of Tajal Chan Ahk. Unlike other Classic Maya palatial complexes, the one at Cancuen offers a unique opportunity to study its planning, given that this construction episode was built in a very short time and later modifications did not significantly alter its design.

Spatial Analysis of Cancuen's Regal Palace

Excavations in the palatial complex of Cancuen did not find archaeological evidence of activity areas, given that the majority of its buildings and rooms were either cleaned or intentionally filled before abandonment. As a result, very few middens were excavated. Some ritual-related activities were inferred from cached vessels, burials, and other types of dedicatory offerings, although most were found in relation to earlier phases of construction and not to the ones dated to Tajal Chan Ahk's reign. This limited number of artifactual contexts made it necessary to rely largely on a detailed spatial analysis as the basis for the architectonic interpretation (Barrientos 2014:790–849).

Just as chronological or diachronic analyses rely on sequential sets of data, spatial-functional analysis of architecture must be based solely on data that can be related synchronically. As for the case of Cancuen's regal palace, chronological excavations proved that most visible architecture belong to the same period (fourth and fifth episodes), thus allowing this kind of approach.

The most basic and important practice of analyzing architecture is to determine its function. In studying architectural form, scholars have assumed that architectural types reflect building and social function (Rapoport 1990:11). However, it has been considered that such associations should not be applied directly, and it is preferred to say that the buildings that exhibit a common form may share a common function (Harrison and Andrews 2004:116). For that reason, although palatial architectonic morphology is important, such as the number and size of rooms and the presence of benches, morphology alone is not enough to interpret the different spatial units of palatial complexes and to infer building functions: "form does not necessarily

follow function, any more than function is determined by form" (Preziosi 1983).

Alternatively, the different spaces of the Cancuen regal palace have been approached through a contextual analysis that includes "a complex articulation of the entire network of relationships found between rooms, clusters of rooms and functional zones" (Hitchcock 2000:53–57). In what has been called a "sociology of architecture," variables of analysis go beyond the form of buildings and include aspects such as permanence, scale, centrality, uniqueness, visibility, proximity, access, and privacy, among others (Barrientos 2014:792). Distributions and connectedness of single buildings and open spaces are thus viewed as a language that has its own rules of construction and syntax because there was a need for consistency and regularity in architectural planning (Ankerl 1981; Moore 2005:107; Preziosi 1983:319). As Louise Hitchcock (2000:21) notes regarding architectural contexts: "The study of its structured distribution is a method for recognizing certain forms of behavior in the archaeological record, through the detection of rule-bound or deliberate patterns."

In addition, the functional interpretation of the palatial complex was based on four main types of activities, as they have been identified by different archaeological and iconographic studies: (1) residential (permanent and temporary); (2) ritual (marriages, accessions, feasts, sacrifices, war captive presentations, dancing, divination and other types of public ceremonies); (3) administrative (visiting dignitaries, gift exchange, local and external tribute collection); and (4) communication between the different palace areas (Barrientos 2014:204). Although no evidence of storage, artistic, or other economic activities was found, we cannot discount that they may have been implemented in some of the palace areas.

The results of this spatial analysis identified four main sections that were designed as clusters for different activities: the West Section (northwest, west and southwest patios); the Central Section (south, central, north, and lower north patios); the Eastern Section (southeast corridor and northeast, east, and southeast patios); and the Main Plaza, which is the easternmost closed courtyard of the regal palace. In addition, the Acropolis is surrounded by three open plazas on its four sides: East Plaza, South Plaza, North Plaza, and a closed courtyard (Southwest Exterior Patio) (Figure 10.2).

In order to calculate the amount of people that could have been involved in the activities defined above, the area of its 12 internal patios was calculated: 8,710 m^2. A conservative average area of 15 m^2 per person suggests a

capacity of 650 people at once, but it is unlikely that all palace areas were used simultaneously. Using the same parameters, a maximum of 250 attendants have been estimated for the Main Plaza; 160 attendants in the Central Section (north, central and north patios); and 120 attendants in the northeast/east patios (Barrientos 2014:839–40).

It is argued that only small-scale private compounds were used as permanent residences. The West Section shows a high degree of privacy, making structures K7-33 and L7-12 the best candidates for the royal residence of Tajal Chan Ahk and his immediate family. The long rows of private rooms of structures L7-14, L7-15, and L7-16 seem to correspond to temporary residences for important visitors or storage areas. This would then suggest that 30 to 50 persons resided permanently, plus 20 or 30 additional personnel (military guards and sacristan/priest officers) and a maximum of 40 temporary residents. This makes a total of 90 to 120 people (average of 105 people) that inhabited the palatial complex at the same time.

The analysis of access, privacy, proxemics, and visibility identifies the Central Section as a ceremonial path reserved for important foreign visitors and local high-status nobles, which initiates in the southern staircase of Structure L7-9 and ends at the throne room in Structure L7-1. The aesthetic, epigraphic, and spatial elements found in this route make it a statement of the power structure of Tajal Chan Ahk's regime. The north side of Structure L7-1 was a place where the ruler could have addressed a large audience, associated with ballgame rituals.

The East Section was designed to conduct rituals that could or could not have involved the participation of the king and the entire royal court. A "secondary" throne room in Structure L7-22 and the Northeast Patio was an area reserved for private feasts, while the adjacent Main Plaza could have been used for larger events that could have involved food and drink, as is suggested by the presence of a large kitchen in Group L6, located southeast of Structure L7-26 (Morán 2003).

Special attention was also taken to interpret the different peripheral sectors of the Acropolis because they include a considerable number of passage-gateway structures, as discussed later.

All these inferences define the regal palace of Cancuen as a truly multifunctional built environment. Furthermore, from a structural interpretation that goes beyond the morphological, aesthetic, typological, and functional aspects, this palace is conceived of, from its political value, as a material expression of the society and individuals who were responsible for its existence. If the primary purpose of architecture is the ordering of space, this

palatial complex had all its components arranged in a hierarchical design suited to support the court ideology (symbols of wealth, power, order, and heritage) expressed in diplomatic settings, administrative seats, and places for meetings and councils. Its intricate layout has clear distinctions in size, access, decoration, and visibility, indicating that it responded to a particular political regime. At the same time, the constant modifications of its later construction episodes indicate that it was adapting to the sociopolitical changes coming from within and outside the regime of Tajal Chan Ahk. Hence, the regal palace functioned as an agent of change itself, where architecture played an important role in staging social practice between the royal court and the rest of the population through their access to different areas according to their social status.

The Role of Long Houses in Cancuen's Regime

As mentioned above, one of the main types of buildings found in palatial complexes is the passage-gateway structure. These are variants of the long buildings known as "range structures" (Kowalski 1987:77), which are found in almost any Lowland Maya site. Moreover, Charlotte Arnauld (2001) has identified them as a class of "long houses," characterized by a wide large room, or gallery, whose interior space is not adequate for a household. Due to their large quantity of rooms, they were highly visible and were usually located surrounding closed courtyards or in front of open plazas (see Arnauld, Chapter 8, in this volume).

Long houses were built either as single buildings or as part of palatial complexes; due to their high frequency, they can be considered as one of the most important stages of social interaction in Maya cities.

When located in the perimeter of palace complexes, they could have functioned as visual and spatial "filters" that separated the interior private spaces, reserved for the royal court, from the public open spaces in front of them. For that reason, special attention has been given to the presence of these multiroomed buildings in the palace complex of Cancuen.

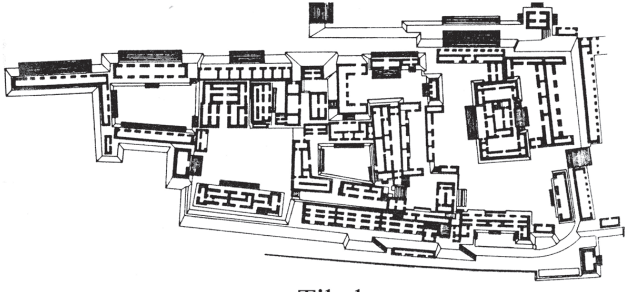
Structure L7-9 is one the best-known buildings of the regal palace compound at Cancuen and corresponds to this particular type of long house. Its initial layout was clearly designed to conduct visitors through a central corridor or to lateral open rooms (Figure 10.3). It was the antechamber to the South Patio, where important ceremonies were performed by the ruler, the royal court, and visitors. The interior plan of this building was modified throughout the reign of Tajal Chan Ahk, mostly between 780 and 800 CE.

All internal lateral doorways were blocked, creating multiple single rooms, some with elevated benches and small interior staircases. The rooms with benches did not face the interior space but the southern facade and main staircase (Figure 10.3). This suggests that these exterior rooms were created to attend to local visitors who did not access the South Patio, probably for activities such as tribute collection and other types of public presentations. This also implies that these new improvised throne rooms could have been used by nonroyal elites who did not have privileges to use the interior areas of the Acropolis, serving as intermediaries between the royal court and non-elite actors (see Tsukamoto and Esparza, Chapter 11, this volume).

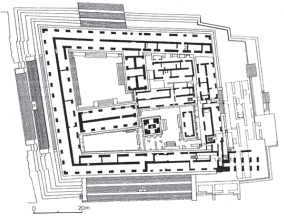
This scenario is especially important because it correlates with other patterns identified in Cancuen during the second half of Tajal Chan Ahk's reign. Excavations in residential areas north of the palace complex have identified a large variety of architectural styles and ceramic complexes, indicating that the site population had increased with immigrants from other regions, including the Northern Maya Highlands and the Tabasco-Veracruz zone (Forné et al. 2011). This increasing "multiregional" population seems to have been the labor force that produced a significant amount of jade preforms (Andrieu et al. 2012; Kovacevich 2011), obsidian blades, and other handcrafts and piedmont commodities that were exported to the lowlands and gave Cancuen total control of the Upper Pasión River region. This was largely due to the development of an economic regime that relied on the interaction between the ruler, the royal court, and a new emerging mercantile nobility (Demarest 2013b; Demarest et al. 2014; Demarest et al. 2017; Demarest et al., Chapter 18, this volume). These new political actors soon claimed a place in the palace complex, through the appearance of long houses as spaces where they could manifest their new political roles. In turn, these types of buildings evolved into what was later known as council houses.

Palace Complexes at the End of the Classic Period

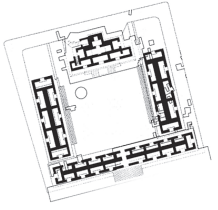
A comparative analysis of palatial complexes dated to the second half of the eighth century shows that, like Cancuen, other sites in the central Maya Lowlands were characterized not only by the presence of monumental acropolises but by the increasing frequency of multiroomed long structures. In some sites such as Nakum and San Clemente, these long houses reached very large proportions, making the facades of palace compounds visually impressive. Excavations in all these palaces have also uncovered evidence of minor architectural modifications like the ones described for Cancuen,



Tikal



Palenque



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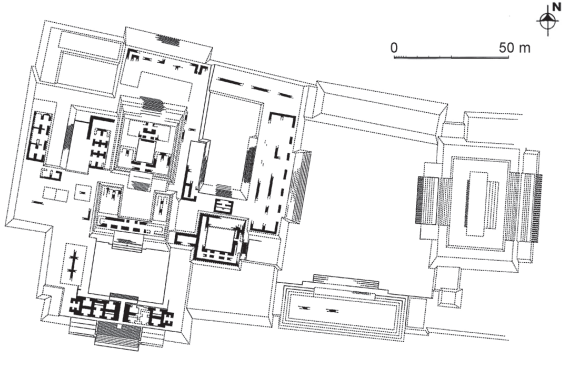
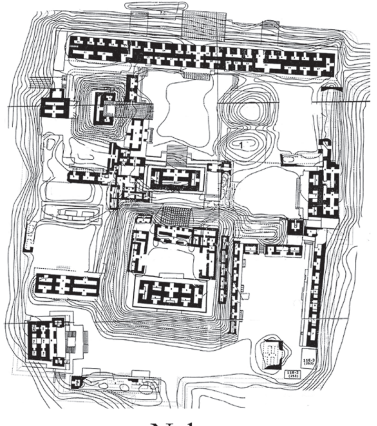
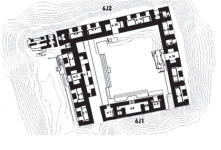


Cancuen



Nakum



La Blanca

Figure 10.3. Comparative chart of Cancuen's palatial complex and other Maya palaces (Illustration by Tomás Barrientos, after Andrews 1975, 1989; Muñoz 2010; Yaeger 2010; Źrałka and Hermes 2012).

especially the increase in the amount of rooms by blocking doorways and adding division walls.

The preeminence of long houses in palatial complexes across the central lowlands between 750 and 800 CE is interpreted as evidence for important sociopolitical changes that were happening in many large and small centers (see Źrałka et al., Chapter 12, this volume). Based on the evidence discussed for Cancuen, the increase of long houses reflects the division and fragmentation of power, where the institution based in royal titles was losing its capacity to centralize authority. As a result, these monumental palaces became the material expression of decentralized regimes that demanded interaction spaces for a growing nonroyal nobility.

The sudden collapse and abandonment of Cancuen (Demarest 2014) and other sites in the central lowlands truncated the development of these transformation processes seen at other sites like Naachtun and Caracol (see Inomata, Chapter 4; Nondédéo et al., Chapter 6; and A. Chase and D. Chase, Chapter 13, all this volume). Many palace complexes were left unfinished or were slowly abandoned, and some were re-occupied by non-elite populations and squatters throughout the ninth century CE.

Nevertheless, the political changes at the end of the Classic period seem to show a process of continuity in the northern Maya Lowlands (see Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume), as can be noted by the development of long houses in that region. At sites like Ek Balam, Santa Rosa Xtampak, and Sayil, long houses were incorporated into massive palatial compounds, in a similar way to Cancuen and the sites of the central lowlands. Yet in many sites long houses were built as single buildings, whether in small scale or with monumental proportions, such as the Palace of the Governor at Uxmal, Structure 44 at Dzibilchaltun, and Structure 424 (Nohochna) at Edzna (see Arnauld, Chapter 8, this volume). As noted previously by Arnauld (2001:395), the majority of long houses in the northern lowlands were smaller and located outside the main public plazas, directly related to residential compounds:

> These open halls are smaller and more integrated to residential groups, probably functioning individually as collective houses for noble lineages. The variety of distinct cases in the north suggests certain degree of experimentation in ruling systems more or less hierarchical and more or less shared.

Diachronic analysis of palatial architecture suggests that at the end of the Classic period, long houses evolved into council houses, as the monarchical regimes of the central lowlands failed and eventually collapsed. The

disappearance of monumental palaces was then one of the many material expressions of the termination of the sacred lord (*k'uhul ajaw*) institution. At the same time, the proliferation of single, small long houses (*nim ja*) reflects the process of decentralization that characterized the Postclassic regimes in the northern lowlands (see D. Chase and A. Chase, Chapter 16; Ringle et al., Chapter 14, both this volume).

Research at the regal palace in Cancuen has also provided important evidence that this process was not limited to the northern lowlands. Instead, many minor independent sites in the central lowlands like Cancuen began to experiment with new forms of political regimes, where long houses played an important role as stages in the constant negotiation of power. These multiroomed buildings permitted the new nobility to participate as active agents in changing sociopolitical structures, whether in public rituals or other economic oriented activities. At the same time, the transformation of these peripheral buildings allowed the ruler and the royal court to maintain their exclusive use and access to the inner and private spaces until the whole system collapsed and the era of monumental palaces came to its end.

Conclusion

For many decades, Mayanists have noticed the presence of palatial complexes with long buildings that contain multiple exterior doorways that lead to single rooms. Given that in most cases these long houses do not present evidence of household activities, their functional interpretations have remained an obscure matter. In this chapter, spatial analysis of the palatial compound at Cancuen offers a new insight into these buildings, correlating it with the political regime developed by ruler Tajal Chan Ahk at the end of the eighth century. In addition, a more general diachronic view of Maya palaces indicates that this particular type of building became the main component of palatial compounds during that time, in a period that can be called the "Golden Age" of palaces in the central Maya Lowlands.

The proliferation of monumental palaces in this period is also contemporaneous to the "balkanization" process that characterized the central lowlands, in which small centers like Cancuen reached a high degree of political independence due to the breakdown of large hegemonic states during the first half of the eighth century, like the Kaanul dynasty established at Calakmul.

Although the new small polities were part of the larger sociopolitical system of sacred lords (*k'uhul ajaw*) that existed in the Maya Lowlands since

the beginnings of the Classic period, their rulers developed new forms of political regimes that were adapting to the political landscape. In Cancuen, ruler Tajal Chan Ahk took advantage of the site's strategic location on the Pasión River to transform the city into a "multiregional port." Merchants and handicraftsmen from different regions resided or passed through Cancuen, becoming active agents of a political regime that controlled the flow of raw materials and finished objects in a complex network of communication and trade routes in the highlands and lowlands.

In order to incorporate the new mercantile nobility into his political realm, ruler Tajal Chan Ahk invested a considerable amount of resources in creating one of the largest palace complexes in the Maya Lowlands. This palatial compound included various long houses in its perimeter, such as Structure L7-9, that served as one of the two main entrances of the Acropolis and as a stage for different public activities of religious, economic, and political nature. Its interior design was modified to accommodate lesser nobles in small throne rooms that faced the main staircase, reflecting a process of political decentralization where the sacred ruler had to share some of the attributes that were previously exclusive of the royal court. Within this regime, new political actors had to be brought to the palatial stage, making it necessary to modify the architectural spaces that were designed for that purpose while still maintaining a high degree of hierarchical physical separation.

If palatial architecture is defined as one of the main material expressions of Classic Lowland Maya sociopolitical structures, the increasing frequency and centrality of long houses can be linked to the processes of transformation that were occurring at Cancuen and other sites at the end of the eighth century. This also includes sites in the northern lowlands that endured after the collapse of the *k'uhul ajaw* system and developed less centralized regimes.

In sum, the chronological and spatial analysis of Cancuen's regal palace found a close correspondence between architectural design and political history. The constant construction and redefinition of Maya palaces indicates that the political landscape during the Classic period was not based on a single rigid system but on a dynamic array of regimes that evolved through time in a process that went beyond the abandonment and migration events of the ninth century. Furthermore, it is expected that the advance in palatial studies in the Maya Lowlands will represent an important device to improve our understanding of the political transformations during this and other periods.

11

Title, Space, and Architecture

Negotiating Kingship in the Classic Maya Dynasty of El Palmar, Mexico

KENICHIRO TSUKAMOTO AND OCTAVIO Q. ESPARZA OLGUÍN

One of the transformations that occurred in Maya kingship during the Late Classic period (ca. 600–800 CE) was a drastic increase in the number of individuals who bore specific titles in courtly scenes, a process that has been interpreted as the balkanization of power (Sharer and Golden 2004). Some scholars have suggested that those titles entailed specific ranks and duties in kingship (Lacadena García-Gallo 2008; Zender 2004b) and others linked them to a question of bureaucracy in Classic Maya society (Foias 2013; Jackson 2013). It is equally possible that they were just titles of honor without specific responsibilities, or that individuals with titles played multiple roles. In addition to the royal titles of *k'uhul ajaw* and *ajaw,* a variety of other titles such as *sajal, ti'sakhuun, yajaw k'ahk', ajk'uhuun, lakam,* and so on evoke the dynamics of factional competition (Brumfiel and Fox 1994; Chase and Chase 1992). However, epigraphic evidence shows that some persons held more than one title or moved from one title to the other (Houston and Stuart 2001; Martin and Grube 2008). They were probably ranked within a polity (Foias 2013:95, Table 4.1; Houston and Stuart 2001), but its hierarchical relation must have been dynamic as outcomes of political processes and historical contingencies rather than static. Some scholars call them subroyal elites (Webster et al. 1998), but their ranks and residential settings associated with the same title appear to have varied across regions (Jackson 2013). These ongoing debates and alternative interpretations imply that the nature of nonroyal elites needs further investigation.

The uncertainty of their duties and statuses lies in the fact that studies of nonroyal elites have relied primarily on courtly scenes depicted on stone monuments and polychrome vessels that usually display deference to kings.

These scenes are a political order perceived by kings or their royal relatives but are not perceptions of nonroyal elites. There are only a few examples that represent the nonroyal elites as protagonists in the context of a large capital center (Bíró 2012; Jackson and Stuart 2001; Schele 1991). Moreover, only a few textual data have been successfully contextualized with their spatial and material settings (Golden and Scherer 2013; Tsukamoto et al. 2015; Webster 1989). Further archaeological, epigraphic, and iconographic studies provide clues to roles of nonroyal elites played in Late Classic Maya kingship. Among a variety of approaches to the study of nonroyal elites, this chapter centers on kingship through epigraphic, iconographic, and archaeological data recovered from different spatial settings that include a city's center, its outlying area, and neighboring dynasties. More specifically, we examine data recovered from the Classic Maya dynasty of El Palmar through comparative as well as conjunctive analyses. We address the question of how the El Palmar royal family and nonroyal elites differently perceived and embodied social relations in the material and spatial settings. We are conscious that the division between the royal and nonroyal elites could be artificial, as Classic Maya interactions must have been much more complex than this simple dichotomy. It is possible that there existed intermarriage between the royal family and nonroyal elites. In fact, we mentioned elsewhere that the protagonist of inscriptions carved on El Palmar's Guzmán stairway was a descendent of *lakam* (meaning "banner") elites, but her mother possessed the title of *ajaw,* which is usually held by the royal family (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2015). Nevertheless, we think that this division illuminates practices and perceptions of different social segments in the El Palmar kingdom.

Maya Kingship during the Late Classic Period (600–830 CE)

Scholars broadly recognize that typological approaches and evolutionary models cannot explain the complexity of Classic Maya political organizations (Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume; A. Chase and D. Chase 1996; Marcus 1993; Sharer and Golden 2004). Maya archaeological studies over decades have demonstrated that there were multiple pathways to Maya kingship resulting from a complex interplay of social, political, economic, environmental, technological, and religious factors (see Andrieu, Chapter 2; Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, both this volume; D. Chase and A. Chase 2004b; Iannone 2003). The variability of internal political organizations indicates that the nature of Maya rulership should not be conceptualized as a politically, socially,

and economically coherent locus that tightly integrates its participants into a single political organization. Rather, intended and unintended actions and interactions create a variety of pathways that in turn constrain and guide subsequent actions, experiences, and interactions (Bourdieu 1977; Giddens 1979, 1984).

We do not argue that Classic period Maya kingdoms did not share any sociocultural characteristics and pathways. For instance, in most Maya polities public spaces such as plazas and patios played critical roles as political arenas that provided participants with shared practices and perceptions as well as with opportunities to evaluate kingship (Inomata 2006; Tsukamoto and Inomata 2014). The steps of stairways and multilevel platforms in front of plazas at several polities were commonly used to display political hierarchy (Houston 1998). In the Late Classic period, numerous kingdoms experienced an increase in population size (Thomas 1981; Tourtellot 1988), probably transforming sociopolitical organizations. Although nonroyal elites could have existed during previous periods, their visibility on the center stage of rulership occurred during this period (Fash et al. 1992; Houston and Stuart 2001:73; Jackson 2013; Stuart 1993). Yet the correlation between the titles of nonroyal elites and political complexity derived from population increase is problematic.

A critical point regarding elite titles among Classic Maya kingdoms is their heterogeneous distribution. Although further investigations may well provide alternative evidence, available data indicate that they were mostly concentrated in western Maya kingdoms, especially those located in the Usumacinta region (Bíró 2012; Jackson 2005, 2013). The distribution of *sajal* exemplifies this tendency while the title of *ajk'uhuun* is spread more widely across the lowlands (Jackson 2013:86). What matters most is that these titles are nearly absent in the inscriptions of largest capitals such as Calakmul and Caracol, where administrative functions must have been complex (A. Chase and D. Chase 1996; Chase, et al. 1990; Folan 1992). Instead, those elites are present at medium-sized kingdoms such as Cancuen (Jackson 2013:150), Motul de San José (Foias 2013), Río Azul (Lacadena García-Gallo 2008), among others. These data signal that the existence of elite titles should not be articulated with surging population and the scale of kingdoms uncritically. There probably existed complex social relations resulting from actions and perceptions of diverse social segments. In this regard, we should give close attention to negotiations of power and authority between the royal family and nonroyal elites and should analyze how those negotiations were

reflected in the material and spatial settings. We address this question based on archaeological and epigraphic data recovered from the Classic Maya kingdom of El Palmar and its neighboring sites.

The Classic Maya Kingdom of El Palmar

Site Settings

El Palmar is located in southeastern Campeche, Mexico. It is surrounded by polities such as Calakmul (the seat of the Snake kingdom after 635 CE), Becan, La Milpa, Río Azul, Río Bec, and Yaxnohcah. El Palmar consists of the civic core or the Main Group and several outlying groups surrounding the Main Group. Recent airborne lidar mapping that covered an area of 94 km^2 in and around the Main Group detected over 10,000 structures that formed more than 500 plaza groups, causeways, possible marketplaces, extensive lithic workshops, and intensive agricultural lands such as raised fields in *bajos* and terraces. Following Patrick Culbert and Don Rice (1990), our preliminary population estimate suggests that around 20,000–50,000 people lived in that area. These results may indicate that even though El Palmar was not a capital such as Calakmul, Tikal, and Caracol, it was one of the major cities in the Maya Lowlands.

El Palmar's Main Group is composed of monumental structures that include two pyramidal temples about 30 m high (Temples I and II), eight plazas, a palace, a ballcourt, over 100 structures, and reservoirs (Figure 11.1). The central reservoir divides the Main Group into the north and south sections. There are internal and external causeways that connect the different sectors of the Main Group as well as between the Main Group and outlying architectural groups. The results of our test excavations and ceramic analyses in conjunction with radiocarbon dates suggest that people occupied the Main Group from the Late Preclassic period (ca. 300 BCE–250 CE), but its major urbanization occurred during the Middle Classic period (ca. 400–600 CE; Tsukamoto et al. 2012). During the latter period, the first- and second-largest plazas, the Great Plaza and Plaza E, were constructed. These plazas are adjacent and were probably used together for public events, accommodating over 50,000 people (0.46 m^2 / person) (Tsukamoto 2014b). The population estimated from the lidar data accords well with this plaza capacity, suggesting that the large plazas at the Main Group were capable of gathering the entire population of the El Palmar kingdom. We note that this is the preliminary

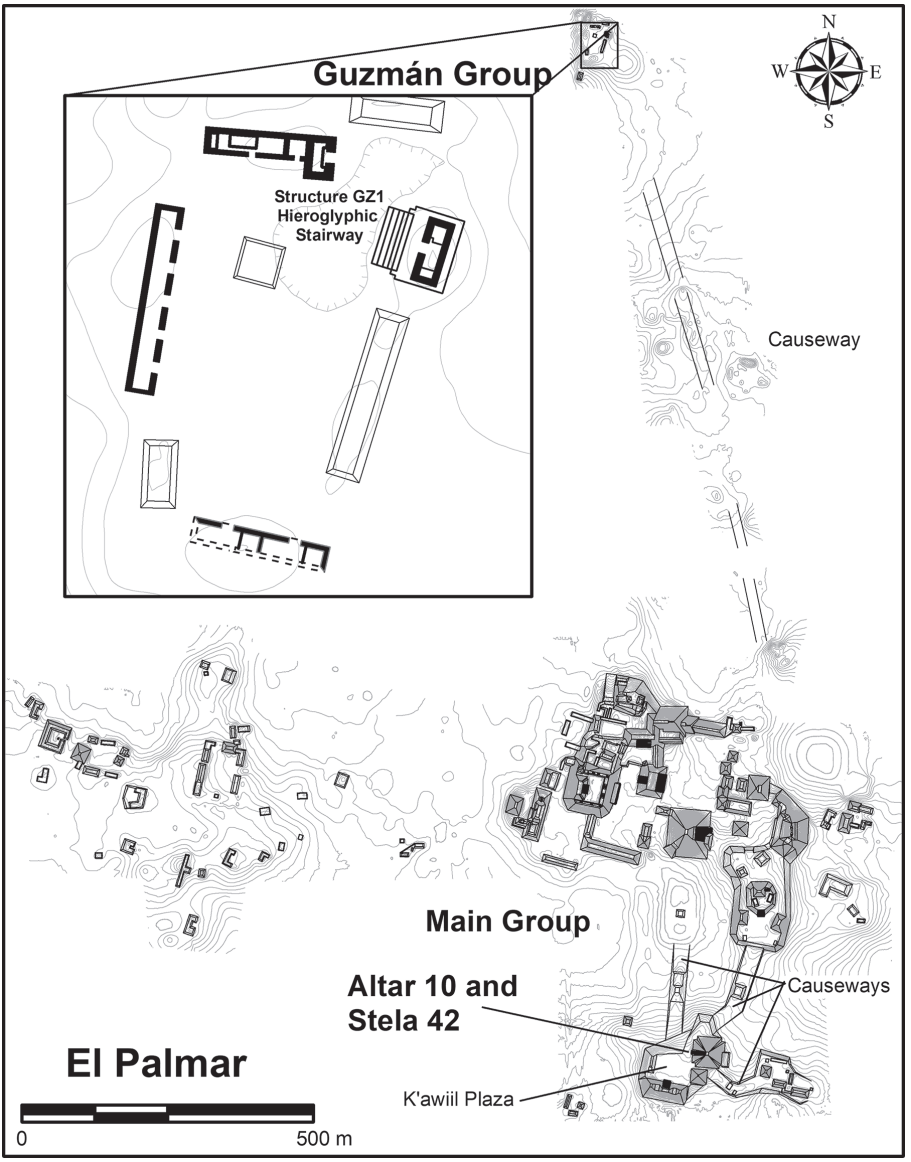


Figure 11.1. Map of El Palmar showing the location of the Main Group and the Guzmán Group with carved monuments mentioned in the text (Map and Drawing by Kenichiro Tsukamoto).

result without a strict chronological control that calls for more sophisticated methods.

By the end of the Middle Classic period (ca. 500–600 CE), El Palmar kings sponsored the erection of carved monuments that principally represents kings' theatrical performance in the plazas (Esparza Olguín and Tsukamoto 2011; Proskouriakoff 1950:Figure 58 and 59). So far we have documented 36 stelae and 13 altars at the Main Group, some of which J. Eric Thompson (1936) had already reported. Numerous carved monuments at the Main Group suggest that theatrical performance of successive kings took place repeatedly in the plazas over centuries. We also discovered three new stelae and a hieroglyphic stairway in outlying groups. Despite the fact that many monuments are heavily weathered, some of them still contain legible inscriptions.

El Palmar Royal Titles

Our epigraphic studies show that the El Palmar kingdom lasted at least 260 years between 554 and 820 CE (Esparza Olguín and Tsukamoto 2011; Tsukamoto 2014a). One of the monuments, Altar 10, symbolizes El Palmar's kingship (Figure 11.2). It was erected in 554 CE, so far the earliest reliable date carved on stone monuments at El Palmar (Esparza Olguín et al. 2019). The altar is placed at the foot of Temple II that closes the northeast corner of the K'awiil Plaza. This plaza forms the south section of the Main Group, which is linked via four causeways to places: the central reservoir, two other plazas of the Main Group, and a south outlying group. Despite its limited capacity to accommodate people (6,872 people based on the estimate of 0.46 m^2 per person), the number of causeways and the monuments on the plaza indicate the importance of the K'awiil Plaza in the El Palmar kingdom. The altar shows on its top five effigies divided by mat designs that are known as a symbol of Maya royalty. The mat designs are also carved on the altar's side. The central effigy is probably an impersonated ruler whose eye shows a square pupil that usually represents the sun god (Proskouriakoff 1950; Taube 1992b). The four mat designs extend from the king to the round edge of the altar, likely symbolizing the four corners of the universe in which the ruler lies in its center. Four corner spaces between the mat designs represent four deities, one of which we identify as God GI, whose eye contains a hooked pupil. Other three deities are too weathered to identify their characteristics, but they clearly play a role in supporting the king.

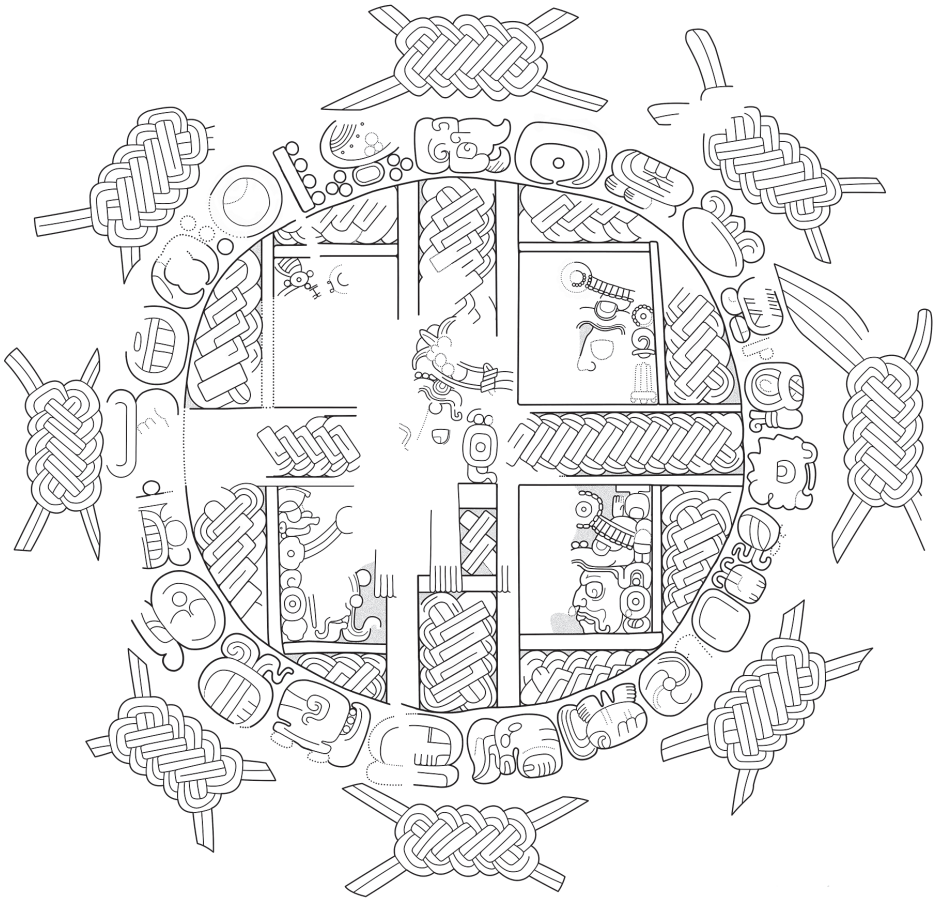


Figure 11.2. Drawing of Altar 10 (Drawing by Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín).

The round edge of the altar's top is enclosed by 23 glyph blocks that celebrate a dedication ritual held on March 21, 554 CE (or 9.6.0.0.0). The first eight glyph blocks (A–G) are *AL?-ya PAT-ja-u ?-TUN 9-AJAW 3-WAY-HAB, alay? pataj u . . . tuun balun ajaw ux wayha[a]b,* "Here, a burden stone [Altar 10] was planted on the day 9 *ajaw 3 wayeb.*" The glyph block A1 tentatively reads *AL?-ya, alay*(?), "here" or, perhaps, "this (one)" (MacLeod and Polyukhovich 2005). The following two glyph blocks (I–J) help set the Calendar Round in the Long Count. They record *TZUTZ-yi? 6-WINIKHAB,* meaning the completion of the sixth *katun* period-ending. The rest of the inscriptions continues *ILA-ji K'AK' P'UL?-la-ja CHAN-na YOP-AT ja?-ta-ma ?-? ? ? K'AWIL-la TOK'? SAK-o 6-PIT?-AJAW, ila[a]j K'a[h]k' P'ulaj Chan Yopa[a]*

t jatam? ?-? ? ? k'awi[i]l to[o]k' sak[h]o'[o]k(?) wak pi[i]t(?) ajaw, "He witnessed, K'ahk' P'ulaj Chan Yopaat [who holds the title of] jatam? . . . k'awiil took' . . . White Valley(?), the lord of Six Palanquins(?)." *SAK-o-ka* is transliterated and translated as *sak[h]o'[o]k(?),* "White Valley," by Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo and Søren Wichmann (2004:152), although the glyphic blocks of Altar 10 lack a syllabogram *ka.* The reading of the glyph *PIIT?* is uncertain, but it might mean "litter" or "palanquin" (Dmitri Beliaev, in Stone and Zender 2011:99). Thus, the lord K'ahk' P'ulaj Chan Yopaat, who holds a title of White Valley, is a lord of Six Palanquins.

The round altar is paired with Stela 42 that depicts a possible ruler's effigy who wears a decorated headdress and a large pectoral with a knife or *k'awiil* scepter grabbed with his right hand as his symbolic regalia (Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume) and a shield with the left hand. Due to heavy erosion of glyph blocks that are located on the left upper corner of the stela, we cannot ascertain whether the personage is the ruler K'ahk' P'ulaj Chan Yopaat.

The glyphic blocks, *sakho'ok* and *wak piit ajaw,* are El Palmar royal titles that were continuously carried by successive rulers during the Late Classic period. We mentioned elsewhere that the El Palmar royal titles also appear at other archaeological sites such as Calakmul, Yaxchilan, Chacchoben, Icaiché, Río Azul, and the Naj Tunich cave, indicating El Palmar's extensive political network (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2015). An important point of these titles is the absence of the *k'uhul* (divine) sign. Nikolai Grube (2005, 2008) examined the political implication of the lack of the *k'uhul* sign in southeastern Campeche. He analyzed the royal titles of Uxul, Champerico, Los Alacranes, and Oxpemul and figured out that all the titles lack the *k'uhul* sign. Instead, kings in those polities possess toponymic titles. He suggests that the lack of *k'uhul* sign implies the hegemonic power of the Snake kingdom (Calakmul) over them because of the presence of the Snake emblem glyph carved on the monuments of those sites. Thus, the second title, *wak piit,* is El Palmar's toponym.

We suggest that the Snake kingdom also intervened El Palmar. We detected the Snake emblem glyph with its king's name, Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, in the inscriptions of the stairway at the Guzmán Group, an outlying group located 1.3 km north of the Main Group (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2015). Moreover, the name of one of the most powerful kings in the Snake kingdom, Yuknoom Ch'een II, is carved on Stela 12 of the Main Group (Esparza Olguín and Tsukamoto 2011). Despite this political relation between the Snake kingdom and El Palmar, the square pupil of the ruler K'ahk' P'ulaj

Chan Yopaat carved on Altar 10 propagandized his divine kingship to the public.

Political Order: Practices and Perceptions of the El Palmar Royal Family

Current data do not answer when the El Palmar kingdom started using the two royal titles, *sakhoʾok* and *wak piit ajaw,* but a polychrome cylinder vase recovered from the site of Icaiché provides a clue as to how El Palmar royal family perceived El Palmar kingship through those titles (Figure 11.3). Fernando Cortés de Brasdefer (1996:6, Figure 6) discovered the vessel at a site that he called El Señor del Peten. More recent regional reconnaissance done by Ivan Šprajc (2008:93–94), however, reported that El Señor del Peten was one of the outlying groups of Icaiché, which is located about 18 km east of El Palmar. The vessel represents four actors in the courtly scene with four vertical texts, two L-shaped texts, and a diagonal text. The main text (A1–A6), located at the left side of the scene, begins with the Primary Standard Sequence. One of the L-shaped texts describes an El Palmar ruler, Aj Sak Bohb Pat (Tsukamoto 2014a; Zender 2004b:222), with the royal title of *sakhoʾok baah kab wak piit ajaw.* He sits on the highest step against a throne. Facing the ruler is a possible prince royal, Aj Yax Tohlook, who holds the title of *sakhoʾok* but not *wak piit ajaw.* Behind Aj Yax Tohlook is a young man who does not hold any royal title but a title *ba-TZʾAM-ma chʾo-ko, baahtzʾam chʾok* (Christophe Helmke, personal communication 2017). The title *chʾok* identifies this male person as a "youth" (Grube and Stuart 1987). Here, it may regard this person as "not fully grown (in a social sense)" (Houston 2009:163). The title *baahtzʾam* supports this interpretation because it means "head throne or before the throne" (Saturno, et al. 2017:426; Stone and Zender 2011:97). Judging from these textual expressions, we can surmise that Aj Yax Tohlook and the person with the *baahtzʾam chʾok* title belong to the El Palmar royal family, likely the sons of the king, Aj Sak Bohb Pat. If our interpretation is correct, Aj Yax Tohlook is a socially mature prince royal while the person with the title *baahtzʾam chʾok* is an immature son. Surrounding the El Palmar royal family, there are two *ajkʾuhuun* nonroyal elites; one sits while the other stands. *Ajkʾuhuun* is a title likely associated with priestly activities (Zender 2004b), although it is equally possible that those individuals played multiple roles including scribe (Coe and Kerr 1998; Houston 1993).

These data provide clues to practices and perceptions of the El Palmar

Figure 11.3. Rollout drawing of the El Señor del Peten vase (Drawing conducted by Kenichiro Tsukamoto based on Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín's photos, taken at the Centro INAH Quintana Roo, Mexico).

royal family. First, only El Palmar kings (*ajaw*) could hold the *wak piit* title attached to the *ajaw* title. We mentioned that a lack of the *k'uhul* title lies in specific historical contexts of the southeastern Campeche region (i.e., Snake kingdom's political interventions). Second, instead of carrying the *wak piit ajaw* title, other members of the royal family were allowed to bear the *sakho'ok* title. When a member of royal family was not socially mature, however, he could not hold the *sakho'ok* title. If this is the case, then the El Palmar's royal title can be an indicator of genealogical identity and useful for the analysis of other inscriptions. For example, an individual, Upakal K'inich, is drawn in Drawing 29 of the Naj Tunich cave (MacLeod and Stone 1995; Tokovinine 2014). He carries both the *sakho'ok* and *wak piit ajaw* titles, suggesting that he was the current El Palmar king when visiting the cave, although he holds an additional title of *k'uhul ibil.* In contrast, two carved monuments recovered from the sites of Yaxchilan and Río Azul depict not El Palmar kings but royal relatives. The upper left corner of Lintel 26 of Yaxchilan depicts *ti-12-? CHUM-K'AN-JAL-wa T'AB-yi yu-xu?-lu K'AWIIL?-CHAAK? AJ-SAK-o-ka, ti lajuunchan . . . chum kanjalaw t'ab[aa]y yuxul? k'awiil? Chaak? aj sak[h] o'[o]k(?),* "on the day 12 Eb and 0 Pop (February 8, 724 CE), this lintel is carved by K'awiil Chaak?, he of the White Valley," which probably means he is from El Palmar. Likewise, another sculptor, Aj Muut, who carved Stela 2 of Río Azul, bears the *sakho'ok* title (Beliaev and de León 2017:117–121). Royal relatives and members of the nobility who worked as artisans were also reported at Aguateca (Inomata et al. 2001).

Architectural elements drawn on the El Señor del Peten's vessel also visualize perceptions of the royal family associated with an ideal political

hierarchy of the El Palmar kingdom. The actors in the courtly scene do not sit on the same place. The king, Aj Sak Bohb, is seated on the highest step against a backdrop of a throne, followed by Aj Yax Tohlook, who sits on the second step. The politically unrecognized person who cannot hold the royal title of *sakho'ok* but instead holds the immature title of *baahtz'am ch'ok* sits on the lowest step where two *ajk'uhuun* nonroyal elites are located. We suggest that the artist who made this vessel intentionally used or was ordered to use the two titles as well as the steps to visualize the ideal political order of the El Palmar kingdom. The vessel was found not at El Palmar but at the site of Icaiché, suggesting that the audience did not belong to the El Palmar kingdom but this ideal political order aimed to be broadly disseminated to its surrounding polities through gift exchange.

The use of steps as a visual representation of the hierarchical relationship can be seen in other polychrome vessels associated with the El Palmar kingdom. A polychrome vessel (K625) of unknown provenience, for example, represents an El Palmar courtly scene (for the vessel's image, see Kerr 1998). It (K625) depicts an El Palmar ruler surrounded by three individuals. A glyphic block that describes El Palmar ruler's name is likely to have been redrawn in later times (Simon Martin, personal communication 2015) and is therefore difficult to read with confidence. Yet the rest of the texts and iconographic representations seem to be original. As with the vessel of El Señor del Peten, the ruler in the vessel who holds the royal titles of *sakho'ok wak piit ajaw* sits on the highest position with a throne while other three individuals are located on the one-step lower than the king. No glyphic blocks describe those individuals, and therefore their titles are unknown.

Political Order: Practices and Perceptions of Nonroyal Elites

Our archaeological and epigraphic studies suggest that texts and architectural elements located at an outlying group of El Palmar represent an alternative political order perceived by nonroyal elites. During the 2009 field season, we detected a hieroglyphic stairway at the Guzmán Group. The stairway is located in a small plaza which could accommodate up to 2,104 people (0.46 m^2 / person), an estimated number similar to the possible number of elites that existed in the El Palmar kingdom (Tsukamoto 2014b). The plaza was formed by seven structures that placed emphasis with a temple on its east side, a distinctive settlement pattern reported at Tikal (Becker 1971), Caracol (D. Chase and A. Chase 2004b), K'axob (McAnany 1995), among

Table 11.1. List of the El Palmar successive kings and their corresponding *lakam* elites at the hieroglyphic stairway of the Guzmán Group

Time		
Late	El Palmar King	*lakam*
	Yunen ____ (726 CE)	Ajpach' Waal (Protagonist)
	Upakal K'inich	Ajlu _____ chih (Father)
	Ahk _____ Kin	Mam K'awiil Took' (Grand Father)
	Bahlam?	Isjat (Great Grand Father)
	Uk'ab Ux Muwaan Chaak	?
Early	_____ K'inich	?

Note that the king Yunen was depicted at the end of the Step V.

others. Archaeological data recovered from our horizontal and stratigraphic excavations evidenced that the spatial setting of this plaza was transformed to carry out theatrical performance and feasting in concert with the building of the stairway (Tsukamoto 2017; Tsukamoto et al. 2015). Our recent horizontal excavations at four of the seven structures demonstrate that structures surrounding the plaza served not only for public and administrative functions but also for domestic activities. The hieroglyphic stairway attached to the east temple is composed of six steps, and each step contains glyphic texts. Historical events in the stairway are carved on the first five steps (I–V) beginning from the left corner of the lowest Step I. The text on the first step depicts the protagonist of historical events, Ajpach' Waal, who visited Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, the thirteenth ruler of the Copán kingdom, on June 24, 726 CE.

From the second to the fifth step, the texts describe the genealogical list of nonroyal elites who bear the *lakam* title together with successive El Palmar rulers. According to epigraphic studies, the glyphic block *lakam* is a title associated with multiple administrative duties including ambassador, emissary, tribute collection, and military procession (Houston and Stuart 2001; Lacadena García-Gallo 2008; Stuart 2010 [1992]; Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2015). The inscriptions of the stairway list a total of five or more likely six *lakam* elites and associated El Palmar kings beginning from Ajpach' Waal's father with the king Upakal K'inich, who reigned immediately before the current king (Table 11.1). This Upakal K'inich could have been the same king depicted in Drawing 29 of the Naj Tunich cave, although additional data are necessary to prove it. Then the list goes back to remote times until the glyphic blocks indicate the moment of rearing the stairway, saying "and then it happens on the day 10 Ajaw, 18 Sak." The ancestral rulers hold the

royal family title of *sakho'ok,* but none of them holds the title of *wak piit ajaw.* Only an individual Yunen . . . , who appears at the end of Step V, possesses both *sakho'ok wak piit ajaw titles,* meaning that he is the current El Palmar king.

Unlike the courtly scenes drawn on the polychrome vessels mentioned earlier, the Guzmán stairway does not, however, represent the Yunen lord as paramount (Figure 11.4). In the texts, Ajpach' Waal as a descendent of *lakam* elites emphasizes his political relationship with the Copán king Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil from the beginning of the text in Step I, but not with El Palmar Yunen king. On the contrary, the text appears to be a lack of esteem for Yunen king (Tsukamoto 2014b:66). Moreover, the mention of Ajpach' Waal juxtaposes this name with other kings on Step V, beginning from him followed by Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, the Calakmul (the Snake kingdom) king Yuknoom Took' K'awiil and the current El Palmar king Yunen (Figure 11.4). We should note that the name and royal title of the Calakmul king are located at the central axis of the building, one of the most important symbolic places across Mesoamerica. Unlike other carved monuments at Copán, the text of the Guzmán stairway does not depict Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil with the *k'uhul* title. These lines of evidence suggest that Yuknoom Took' K'awiil is represented as the supreme king among them. The most important point in the texts of Step V is the juxtaposition of Ajpach' Waal with the other kings that most likely visualizes his situation in the dynastic alliance.

Discussion

The textual and pictorial representations on polychrome vessels and architectural elements recovered in and around El Palmar visualize different practices and perceptions of the El Palmar royal family and nonroyal elites. Courtly scenes drawn on polychrome vessels display a strict hierarchy, which probably reflects the royal family's perceptions regarding El Palmar kingship. As we mentioned before, only the currently governing king could have had the prerogative to possess the both *sakho'ok,* "White Valley" and *wak piit ajaw,* "the lord of Six Litters" titles in the kingdom. Royal relatives including their ancestral kings were not allowed to bear the lord of *wak piit ajaw* title. This king's title probably represents the "stranger king," separating him from the rest of the population (see Andrieu, Chapter 2; Arnauld et al., Chapter 1; Ringle et al., Chapter 14, all this volume; Gillespie 1989; Graeber and Sahlins 2017a; Sahlins 1985). The square pupil of the ruler K'ahk' P'ulaj Chan Yopaat carved on Altar 10 symbolizes it.

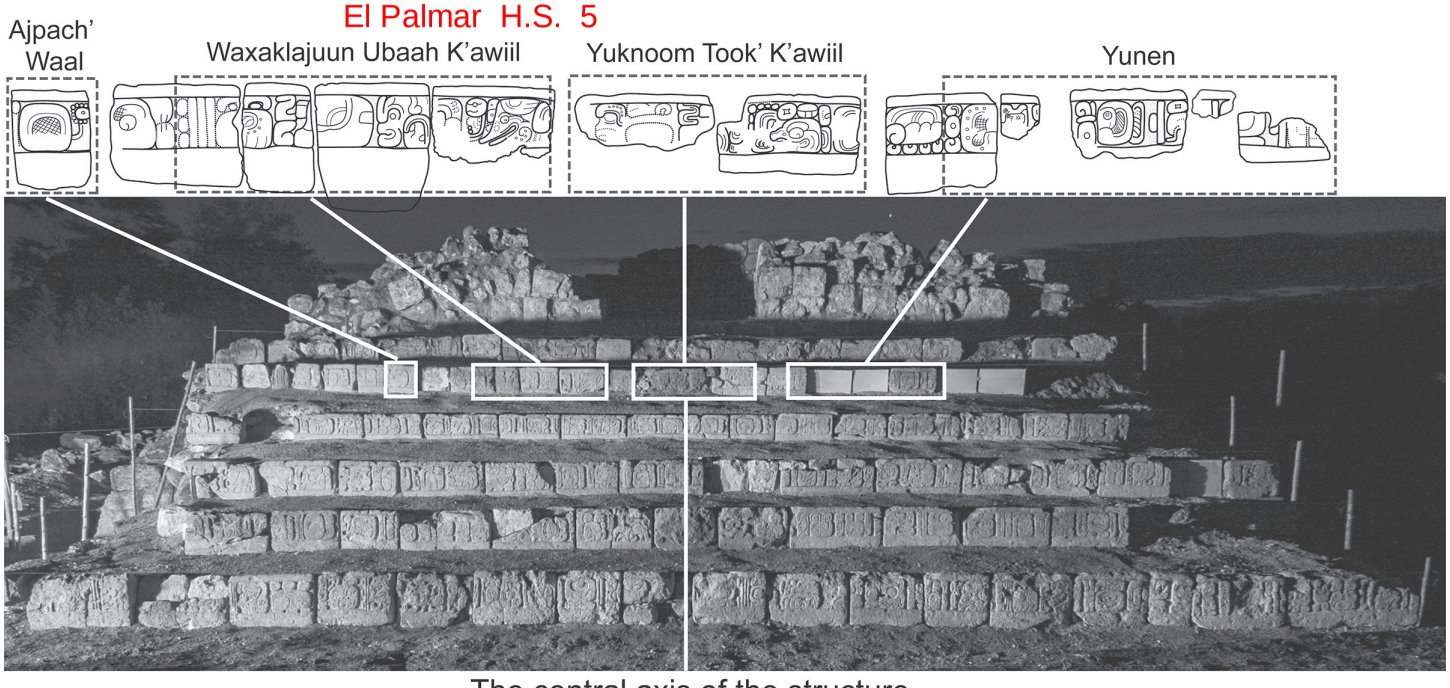


Figure 11.4. Hieroglyphic stairway at the Guzmán Group. Line drawing represents the locations and names of Ajpach' Waal and four kings (Photograph by Kenichiro Tsukamoto; drawing by Octavio Q. Esparza Olguín).

If Royal elites were socially mature, they could carry the *sakho'ok* title. Even though he has a blood tie with the royal family, a socially immature person appears not to have been able to hold the *sakho'ok* title but instead holds the *baahtz'am ch'ok* title that expresses his sociopolitical juvenescence. The El Señor del Peten's vessel represents the youth who shares the same lowest step with *ajk'uhuun* elites, suggesting that his immature status is situated equally to the political position of *ajk'uhuun* elites. Although available data do not answer the question of exactly when this dynastic practice began, the glyphic texts carved on Altar 10 indicate that the use of these two royal titles goes back at least to 554 CE. The strict use of the royal titles may therefore indicate that elites without those titles did not belong to the royal family, that is, nonroyal elites. In fact, Ajpach' Waal and his father Ajlu . . . Chih depicted on the Guzmán stairway possess an enigmatic title of *ajtixah* (Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín 2015), but none of them, including *ajk'uhuun* elites on the El Señor del Peten vessel hold the royal titles. This practice and perception became durable, constraining subsequent practices and perceptions of the royal family that consolidated the hierarchy even among members of the royal family. The genealogical list of ancestral rulers without *wak piit ajaw* title in the Guzmán stairway exemplified its durability over 170 years.

Although nonroyal elites partially shared the visual representation of the hierarchy in the El Palmar kingdom, textual and architectural representations of the Guzmán stairway suggest that they perceived rulership differently during the politically turbulent period. Epigraphic data have demonstrated that Calakmul (i.e., the Snake kingdom) started losing political power in the Maya Lowlands after the Tikal king Jasaw Chan K'awiil I defeated Calakmul's king Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' on August 5, 695 CE (Martin and Grube 2008). New evidence of his visiting La Corona on January 29, 696 CE, however, suggests that Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk' lost in the dynastic battle but seems not to have been decapitated or killed by Jasaw Chan K'awiil I (Stuart 2012). Despite his victory, Jasaw Chan K'awiil I's political authority was limited in the east and south areas of the Maya Lowlands (Martin and Grube 2008:46), a situation that allowed Calakmul's king, Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, to reestablish diplomatic alliances to other polities. We think that one of the political strategies was to ally with Copán through El Palmar. A crucial point of the diplomatic event carved on the Guzmán stairway is that the mediator for the alliance between Calakmul and Copán was not El Palmar Yunen king but a descendent of *lakam,* Ajpach' Waal. We infer that perceptions of *lakam* elites regarding El Palmar rulership are materialized in the order of glyphic texts that show the juxtaposition of Ajpach' Waal; Copán's

king, Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil; Calakmul's Yuknoom Took' K'awiil; and El Palmar Yunen lord on Step V of the Guzmán stairway. It manifests not so much a hierarchical relation represented in the courtly scenes of polychrome vessels as a heterarchical relation—that is, heterogeneous power relations (Crumley 1987; Keswani 1996). The epigraphic and iconographic representations of this heterogeneous relation have been reported in the western Maya region but are nearly absent in other Maya Lowlands (Bíró 2012). In the Guzmán stairway, El Palmar Yunen king did not legitimize his political authority as he rather appears embroiled in factional competitions as well as in interdynastic interaction between Calakmul, Copán, and El Palmar.

Conclusion

In this chapter we demonstrate how different members of a kingdom perceived and embodied kingship. Many courtly scenes depicted on stone monuments and vessels recovered from Maya sites have been interpreted as the materialization of legitimacy and political authority by kings. Carved monuments and polychrome vessels associated with El Palmar, however, provided an alternative view about Classic Maya kingship. Maya kings did not always legitimize their political authority, and not all the kings were goal-seekers (Inomata 2016b). Some kings were unwillingly involved in factional competitions or interdynastic interactions as with El Palmar's Yunen lord. Through the analysis of the El Palmar royal titles, we see that durable practices shape perceptions of people, constraining their subsequent practices that resulted in the creation of a hierarchical relation even among members of the royal family. The practices and perceptions between the royal family and *lakam* elites were not completely different but partly overlapped as indicated by the use of titles and architectural elements and the creation of public space for theatrical performance.

The study of titles remains a critical issue of understanding Classic Maya kinship. In the study of the El Palmar kingdom, the data presented here show the strict practice of using the royal titles of *sakho'ok wak piit ajaw,* but there are some monuments such as Stelae 10 and 14 in which rulers hold only the *sakho'ok* title (Esparza Olguín and Tsukamoto 2011). Because these stelae are partially eroded, we cannot determine the absence of the *wak piit ajaw* title with certainty. Furthermore, an earflare found at Tomb 4 of Calakmul depicts a person not with the *sakho'ok wak piit ajaw* titles but the *sakho'ok k'uhul ibil* titles (Tsukamoto 2014a:317, Figure 6.28, courtesy of Simon Martin). If more variations and inconsistencies exist, they will address new research

questions of power, ideologies, and authority embedded in the titles. The synchronic variation could be tied to dynamic intra- and interpolitical interactions, and the diachronic inconsistency may reflect transformations of kingship. Our ongoing research will answer these questions.

Acknowledgments

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12

Strength in the Face of Adversity

Terminal Classic Development of Nakum in a Wider Geopolitical Vantage

JAROSŁAW ŹRAŁKA, BERNARD HERMES, CHRISTOPHE HELMKE, AND SIMON MARTIN

Recent research at the archaeological site of Nakum, located in northeastern Guatemala, has shown that it experienced significant cultural and demographic expansion at the end of the Classic period at a time when most other Maya sites suffered profoundly from the collapse. In contrast to most Lowland Maya centers where we observe a cessation of architectural construction, monument erection (particularly of carved monuments), and the demise of local dynasties (see Aimers 2007; Arnauld and Breton 2013; Culbert 1973; Demarest et al. 2004), the elite of Nakum initiated important architectural programs, dedicating monuments as well as many sizable structures. This chapter presents both a review of the architectural growth of the site and a chronological outline of the known Terminal Classic monuments at Nakum, comparing their iconography and epigraphy to other contemporary monuments in the region. We hypothesize that the advantageous location of Nakum, on the banks of the Holmul River, combined with the downfall of its powerful neighbors, especially Tikal to the west and Naranjo to the east, enabled the ruling elites of Nakum to expand its trade relationships, to strengthen its political powerbase through intersite networks of allegiance as well as intrasite power sharing with the local elite, and thereby to obtain political and economic independence in the wake of former powers.

Research conducted in the Triangle Park in Guatemala (where Nakum is situated) shows that responses to what we generally call the Classic Maya "collapse" and to changes taking place during the Terminal Classic in this region were diverse: whereas some centers of this region were abandoned rapidly, with almost no evidence of continued occupation pertaining to the

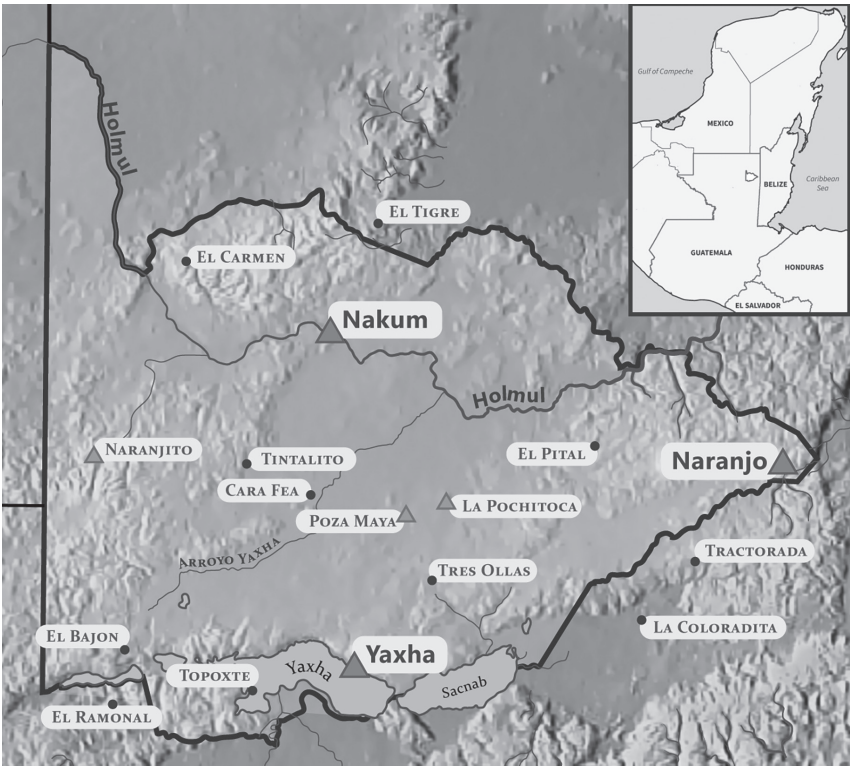

Figure 12.1. Map of the Triangle Park and its surroundings (by Piotr Kołodziejczyk).

Terminal Classic, others suffered a gradual collapse and depopulation, while yet others, such as Nakum, experienced a short burst of cultural growth.

The Cultural Triangle Yaxha-Nakum-Naranjo National Park covers an area of 370 km^2, and it extends over parts of northeastern Guatemala, east of the famous Tikal National Park. The Triangle Park encompasses three major centers: those of Nakum, Naranjo, and Yaxha; several secondary sites such as Poza Maya, La Pochitoca, Tintalito, Naranjito, and El Bajón; and many smaller settlements dispersed through different, usually elevated locations (Figure 12.1). The region of Triangle Park has been investigated since the 1990s by scholars of the Guatemalan Institute of Anthropology and History (IDAEH) with the support of the German government under the aegis of the Triangle Project (Proyecto Triángulo), later renamed to DECORSIAP (Departamento de Conservación y Rescate de Sitios Arqueológicos Prehispánicos), as well as by the PDS Project (Proyecto Desarrollo Sostenible) and finally, since 2006, by the Nakum Archaeological Project (NAP) of the Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland.

Architectural and Demographic Growth of Nakum

The Terminal Classic period at Nakum is represented by the Chumuk phase dated to ca. 800–900/950 CE on the basis of dated monuments associated with ceramic materials and architecture (Źrałka and Hermes 2012:171–173) as well as by several radiocarbon dates collected during the recent research of the NAP (see Table 12.1). In chapter 18, Demarest and colleagues aptly raise the issue of the precise dating and definition of the "Terminal Classic." Here we define it as a ceramic complex with its distinctive components that include new ceramic groups and types (mainly fine paste wares; for further details, see Hermes 2019; Źrałka and Hermes 2012:164–166) that covers the ninth century, although it is possible that in some locations at Nakum occupation lasted longer, toward the tenth century. Our dating of Terminal Classic is supported especially by such carved monuments as Stelae 1, 2, and 5, all of which bear dates covering the ninth century (815 [Stela 1], 849 [Stela 2], and 810 and 840 CE [both recorded on Stela 5]) and by the hieroglyphic bench from Structure 89 that can be ascribed to the second part of this century based on its style and paleographic elements (see below).

Nakum consists of two major sectors (North and South Sectors) connected by an elevated, 250 m long causeway (Périgny Causeway) (Figure 12.2). The most impressive monumental constructions are situated in the South Sector, where the enormous residential complex of the Acropolis is located and many pyramidal temples are clustered around three major plazas of Nakum: the Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Plazas.

Most of the evidence for Terminal Classic occupation and architectural activity at Nakum comes from the South Sector of the site, especially from the Acropolis complex. The Acropolis consists of a large platform (measuring 150 × 170 m at its base) that is surmounted by more than forty structures, most of which are residential, palace-like constructions arranged around sixteen courtyards, with special function structures serving administrative and ceremonial purposes (Figures 12.3 and 12.4a) (Quintana 2014; Quintana and Wurster 2002). Detailed IDAEH investigations of this complex indicate that during the Late Classic the Acropolis had over a dozen structures, all of which were rebuilt during the ensuing Terminal Classic period. The same period saw the construction of some twenty new buildings (Structures G, H, L, M, O, P, Q, S, and possibly K, 13, 24, 27, 62, and the Central Acropolis complex with Structures Y, 63, 63A, 64, 65, and Z located in the heart of the Acropolis platform; Calderón et al. 2008). Most of these were residential

Table 12.1. List of radiocarbon dates associated with Terminal Classic Chumuk phase at Nakum

Lab ID	Project ID	Material and provenience	Radiocarbon age (BP)	Calibrated date, 1 δ (68%)		Calibrated date, 2 δ (95%)		Associated ceramics (name of ceramic phase)
GdA-2457	PANMC 121 *VI/22/5/5*	charcoal, Str. 15, Offering 13; found at the base of Str. 15 platform (its northern face)	1245±25 BP	690–755 CE 760–780 CE 790–805 CE	49.0% 13.9% 5.3%	680–870 CE	95.4%	Chumuk
GdA-2458	PANMC 130 *VI/28/2/11*	charcoal, Str. 14, found in a midden and associated with modeled-carved sherds (Sahcaba)	1195±30 BP	715–745 CE 765–900 CE	4.4% 88.8%	715–745 CE 765–900 CE 920–940 CE	4.4% 88.8% 2.2%	Chumuk
Poz-54121	PANMC 139 *I-14–1-7*	charcoal, temple of Str. X, Central Chamber; area of a hole cut in the uppermost floor of the chamber to place Burial 4, between 5 and 30 cm below the floor, sample associated with Burial 4	1235±30 BP	694–748 CE 765–820 CE 842–860 CE	30.0% 29.8% 8.4%	687–879 CE	95.4%	Chumuk? (sherds from older periods are also present)
MKL-2344	PANMC 144 *I-14–1-7*	charcoal, temple of Str. X, Central Chamber, inside a hole cut in southeastern part of the chamber to place Burial 4, associated with Burial 4 or with veneration rituals of a later date	1100 ± 30 BP	898–925 CE 944–985 CE	27.8% 40.4%	887–1013 CE	95.4%	Chumuk
Poz-96933	PANMC 145 *I-14–1-10*	charcoal, Str. X, Central Chamber, associated with Burial 4; found in the bottom of the pit cut into Floor 1 to place Burial 4;	1065 ± 30 BP	907–914 CE 968–1018 CE	5.5% 62.7%	896–927 CE 942–1023 CE	17.5% 77.9%	Chumuk?
Poz-96932	PANMC 2016/010 *I-6–2*	charcoal, Str. X, Eastern Chamber, on the uppermost floor of the chamber, found in an ashy matrix close to broken vessels of Terminal Classic date with traces of burning (being part of the "termination ritual" or veneration rituals)	1255 ± 30 BP	689–751 CE 760–772 CE	57.7% 10.5%	672–779 CE 790–868 CE	80.3% 15.1%	Chumuk

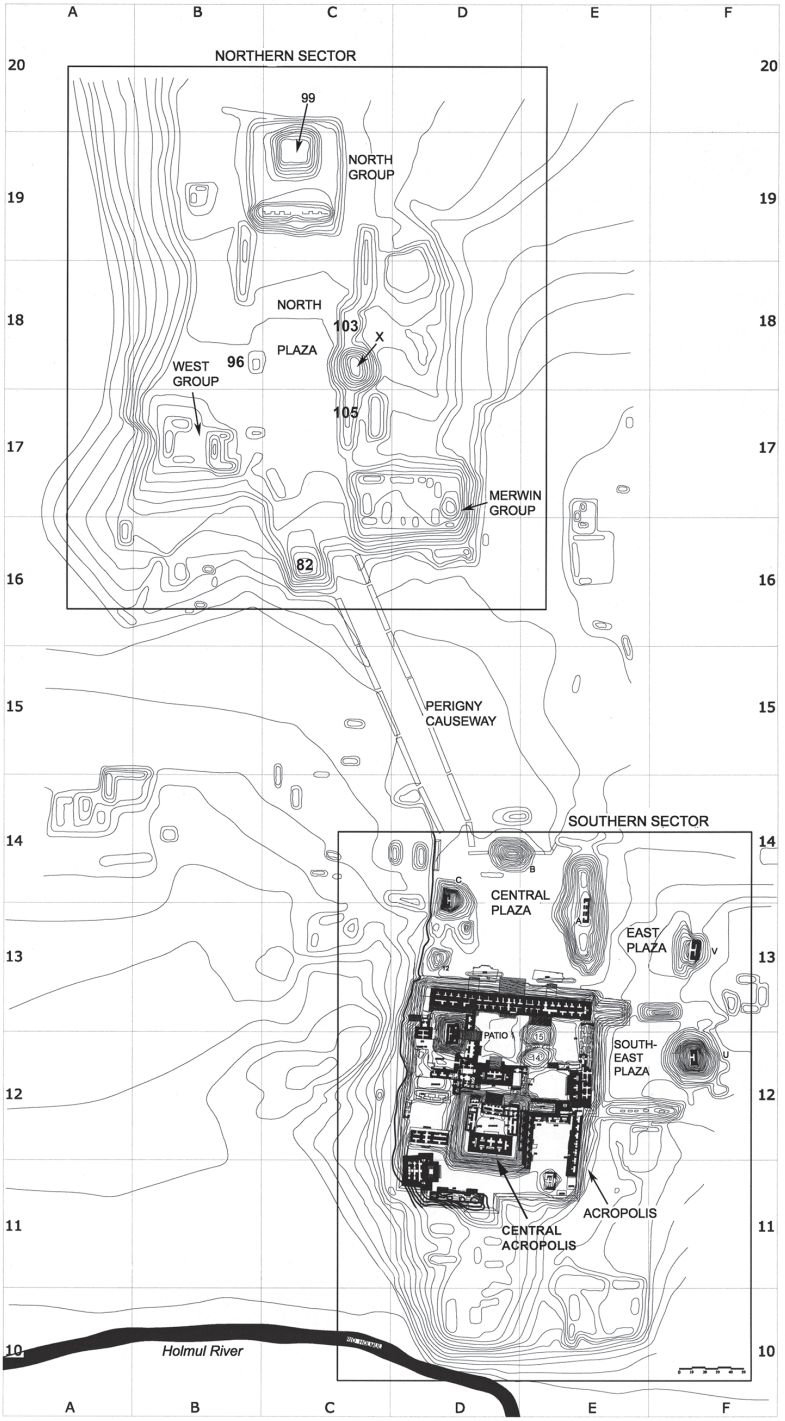

Figure 12.2. Map of Nakum showing two major sectors of the site (after Quintana and Wurster 2002, with corrections made by DECORSIAP and Piotr Kołodziejczyk).

Figure 12.3. Map of the Southern Sector of Nakum featuring the Acropolis and other neighboring structures mentioned in the text (after Quintana and Wurster 2002, with corrections made by DECORSIAP and Piotr Kołodziejczyk).

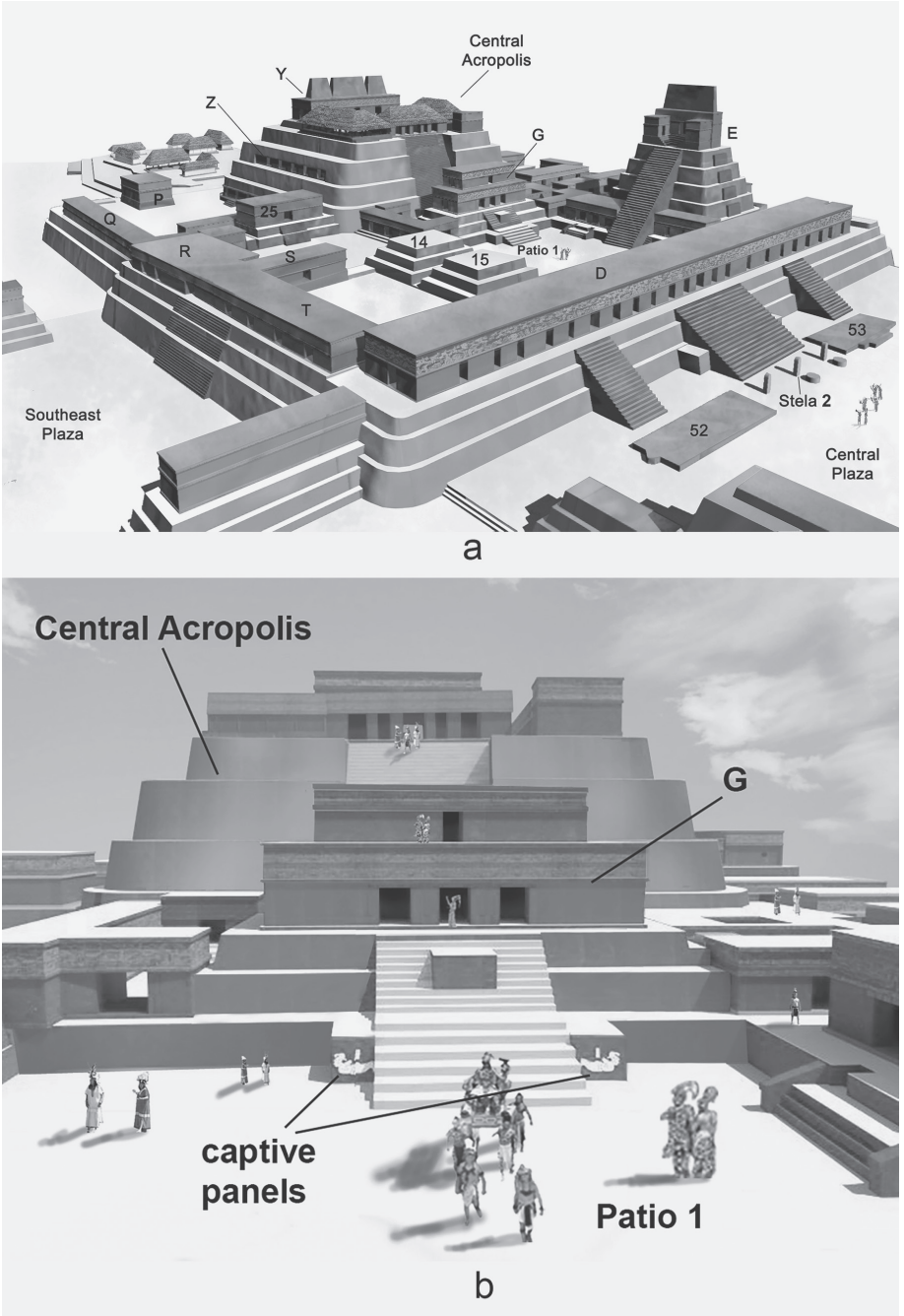

Figure 12.4. (*a*) Reconstruction of the Nakum Acropolis and surrounding structures during the Terminal Classic; (*b*) Reconstruction of Structure G, which shows two captive panels embellishing the stairside outsets (reconstructions courtesy of Breitner González).

structures. Some two-story palatial structures were truly large and impressive constructions (e.g., Structures G, Z, and Y).

One of the largest architectural enterprises of this period was the construction of a new version of the Central Acropolis of Nakum, which most probably served as the seat for the local king and his court (Figures 12.3 and 12.4a). The Central Acropolis underwent important architectural modifications between the Late and Terminal Classic periods when an enormous platform was constructed surmounted by a palace (Structure Y) and several smaller constructions where royal family attendants might have lived. It currently measures 40 × 40 m at its base, towering 19 m above the Acropolis platform. It was initiated during the Preclassic as a platform surmounting a triadic complex, which underwent remodeling in subsequent periods (Calderón et al. 2008). In the Late Classic, the Central Acropolis consisted of a vast platform, possibly plain at its top, without a superstructure. During the Terminal Classic, it was completely sealed and covered by a new version that most probably consisted of a four-terraced platform. Moreover, on the eastern side of this platform, a large, two-tiered palace with 12 chambers (Structure Z) was constructed (Noriega and Quintana 2003). On top of the Central Acropolis platform a compound made up of several buildings was raised during the Terminal Classic. Its central focus was a two-story palace—Structure Y, a likely residence of the royal dynasty, which was the highest and most inaccessible point of the Acropolis at Nakum. In the vicinity of Structure Y are several other buildings (Structures 63, 63A, 64, and 65) of smaller size and of lesser architectural scale. Some of them (Structures 63, 65), as archaeological excavations indicate, served as living and working quarters (Bazy 2004). They were possibly inhabited by royal entourages or courtiers. One building (Structure 64) located at the entrance to the summit of the Central Acropolis might have served to control access for people entering the complex, although residential activities might have also occurred in the structure (Bazy 2004; Źrałka 2008:89).

Other important buildings in the Acropolis dating to the Terminal Classic include Structure G. Before the construction of Structure G, the axial stair to the Central Acropolis was fairly unencumbered, providing relatively free access to this complex. Yet, already with the first phase of Structure G (stage G-1), the access to the Central Acropolis was partly impeded (and thereby controlled), serving as an audience hall with important administrative functions as well as to heighten the power of the enthroned king. Furthermore, east and west of Structure G, a complex set of interconnected rooms was built, creating a kind of labyrinth and further restricting access to the top

of Central Acropolis (Calderón et al. 2008). In its later guise, Structure G was a two-story building consisting of eight chambers (four rooms on each floor) and embellished with stone friezes in its upper zone or facade. The major (northern) facade of the building had during its penultimate remodeling programs depictions of two captives accompanied with hieroglyphic texts made entirely of stucco (Calderón et al. 2003; Źrałka 2008:59–63). They embellished the stairside outsets, flanking the stairway (Figure 12.4b). Both captives are represented prone, lying on their stomachs, their arms bound behind their arms and facing outward, away from the axial stairway. Based on present evidence, these are the earliest representations of captives at Nakum. These serve as indications of the power and preeminence of the local dynasty, asserting its privilege to capture and display captives of war. The iconography of the stucco panels of Structure G thereby say a great deal about the role that it played in antiquity as an opulent seat of power and regal hall of audience. Above each captive is a small inset panel of three glyphs each, making references to the captives they accompany, although these are unfortunately rather eroded.

The scale of the architectural growth of the Acropolis complex during the Terminal Classic period might also be appreciated by the process of enlargement of older Late Classic buildings as is best seen in case of Structures E, F, I, N/60/61, 14, and possibly T (Hermes and Calderón 2003; Źrałka 2008).

It is estimated that the living space of the Acropolis was enlarged from about 526 m^2 in the Late Classic to about 1558 m^2 in the ensuing Terminal Classic, which is to say that the total surface area was increased nearly threefold. Architectural activity was especially focused on the construction of new rooms or the division of existing chambers to create smaller but more private spaces or more restricted access. This is part of a broader trend seen throughout the Maya Lowlands to block as well as increasingly limit access throughout royal palatial compounds, increasing the physical segregation of social strata by means of monumental architecture.

The evidence of Terminal Classic occupation and architectural activity in the Northern Sector of Nakum is not as extensive as in the south. Nevertheless, Terminal Classic occupation has been verified in all excavated complexes investigated during the most recent research of the NAP. The North Group (which was the major complex of this sector) underwent important changes during the Terminal Classic. The latter complex is made up of a vast platform topped by a smaller platform designated Structure 99, several smaller mounds (Structures 98 and 100), and one long range structure (Structure W). Structure 99 was almost entirely constructed during the Preclassic

period, and it seems that it was subsequently abandoned during the Early Classic or early Late Classic periods, only to be reoccupied during the Terminal Classic when three buildings were erected on its summit (Structures 99A–C). Part of the floors of Structure 99A and 99C were covered with scattered broken ceramics and other artifacts destroyed and deposited as part of a possible termination ritual conducted in the context of the abandonment of this construction. Another area where important evidence of Terminal Classic activity was recorded is Structure 104—a unique pyramidal temple in the Northern Sector that is topped by a building with three major, interconnected chambers. Recent research carried out in the temple building brought about the discovery of a Terminal Classic burial and traces of another possible termination ritual that involved the destruction of ceramic censers and other artifacts.

The picture of strong Terminal Classic activity observed in the epicenter of Nakum is also mirrored on the periphery of this site. Most residential groups documented around the epicenter of Nakum showed strong evidence of Terminal Classic occupation. Although the Nakum periphery was only subjected to test-pitting program, the IDAEH and NAP investigations revealed that some 80% of more than 40 peripheral patio groups were inhabited during the Terminal Classic.

Architectural Phases of Terminal Classic Nakum: Continuity of Old Traditions and the Appearance of New Modes

It was possible to distinguish at least two or possibly even three broad architectural phases in the Terminal Classic development of Nakum (Hermes and Źrałka 2012). The first of these can be tentatively dated to the first half of the ninth century, and it included the construction of large buildings with thick walls, usually embellished with stone friezes—this pattern was a clear continuation of preceding (Late Classic) architectural traditions. The next two architectural phases (cautiously dated to ca. 850–900/950 CE), however, involved the construction of buildings with much thinner walls, the partition of architectural spaces in existing chambers to form smaller rooms of a more private or restricted character, the creation of smaller courtyards, and the building of small, sometimes interconnected buildings or rooms between different patios for better control of access in the Acropolis complex (Calderón et al. 2008; Hermes and Źrałka 2012:190). Moreover, new modes appear in the architecture of Nakum, mostly during the second or

final phase of Terminal Classic architectural refurbishments. They included the construction of quadrangular stone pillars, *talud-tablero-atadura* or reverse *talud* style, and round structures (to date, a single example has been identified at Nakum: Structure 12) as well as C-shaped structures that are also characteristic of sites in the Pasión at the same date (Tourtellot and González 2004). The spread of very similar constructions or architectural traits is seen toward the end of the Classic period at many other Maya centers (see Harrison-Buck 2012; Helmke 2006:186–187, Figure 7; Hermes and Źrałka 2012:184–185; Rice and Rice 2004:132; Ringle et al. 1998:219–222; Sabloff and Willey 1967:322; Schwarz 2009). Some of these traits might have appeared due to the movement and spread of people coming from abandoned centers, and others (such as circular buildings) may have spread in tandem with a new ideology based on the cult of a long-lipped wind deity of central Mexico. This ideology served to strengthen the political and religious power of many Maya kings and other Mesoamerican elites in the turbulent times of the Epiclassic / Terminal Classic horizon (cf. Pascual and Velásquez 2012; Ringle et al. 1998; Sabloff and Willey 1967; Schwarz 2009; see also Hermes and Źrałka 2012).

During the Terminal Classic, the emphasis was on the construction of residential or palace structures, as evidenced by the erection of 18 new buildings in the Acropolis complex alone. Outside of the Acropolis, at least four completely new buildings were erected (a circular structure [Structure 12], a three-room, palatial building [Structure 12A], and two vast platforms [Structures 52 and 53]). On the other hand, temples were rebuilt on a very limited scale though two large pyramidal temples (Structures C and V) might have been wholly constructed in the Terminal Classic or at least underwent important remodeling programs at this time. Nevertheless, they are dated to the beginning of the Terminal Classic or to its earlier facet, which was characterized by the continuation of older—Late Classic—trends in architecture. On the other hand, the second phase of the Terminal Classic period at Nakum does not show any evidence of significant construction efforts dedicated to religious structures such as the construction of large temples or pyramids. Moreover, some primarily ritual structures, such as Temple U and Ballcourt 2, seem to have fallen into disuse and may even have been partly dismantled during the second part of the Terminal Classic.

Collectively, it now seems that most carved monuments from Nakum can be associated with the very first phase of the Terminal Classic, which can be roughly dated to 800–850 CE. In contrast, some architectural elements (especially the hieroglyphic bench found in the Northern Sector of Nakum

and described below), can be dated to latter facet of this period, dated to ca. 850–900/950 CE.

A Bit of History: Nakum Monuments in a Wider Context

There are six carved stelae known from Nakum, of which two monuments have been discovered in the recent excavations of the NAP. Most of these monuments were erected during the ninth century CE. However, it is interesting to note that the regal history of Nakum starts very early, in the late Middle Preclassic or beginning of the Late Preclassic with the erection of Stela 4, which features a richly attired person, most probably a local lord shown in a dynamic striding pose (Helmke, Martin, et al. 2018).

After the erection of Stela 4, it is as though Nakum enters a dark age, which is closed in the second part of the eighth century with the erection of Stela 3. During this period of relative obscurity, no carved monuments were erected, or at least none have yet been discovered. Based on archaeological data, we know that Early Classic rulers continued to expand the site, adopting the characteristic *talud-tablero* architecture of central Mexican origin. It seems that Nakum was fully integrated into the sociopolitical system that prevailed at Tikal, its satellites and allies during the Tzakol 3 phase, although the nature of the interactions continues to be debated. This situation continues during the initial part of the Late Classic when despite the growth of the city no carved monuments are known for this period. The absence of Tzakol and Tepeu 1 monuments may also speak of a position of subservience since the erection of monuments may have been sanctioned by specific sumptuary laws and sociopolitical principles.

A dramatic change was brought about with the construction—during the second part of the Late Classic (Tepeu 2)—of an enormous pyramid, Structure U, which was more than 30 m high (it is wholly comparable to contemporaneous temple-pyramids of Tikal), and the erection in 771 CE of Stela 3 at the foot of this structure. Stela 3 depicts a dominant ruler bearing symbols of power. This monument reflects a radical shift, with the rise to power of what we presume was an exceptionally charismatic monarch.

The demise of the major political player of Triangulo Park—Naranjo (Aquino 2007)—as well as the more distant Tikal toward the end of the Classic period (Valdés and Fahsen 2004), both events evidenced by a halt in monumental construction and abandonment of many epicenter complexes at both sites, created a political vacuum that was at least partly filled by Nakum and the aspirations of its lords. At Tikal there is no major construction

after ca. 810 CE, when Stela 24 and its accompanying Altar 7 were commissioned by a lord known as Dark Sun in front of the large Temple 3. The next carved monument, Stela 11, was not dedicated until 869 CE by the last known lord of Tikal, Jasaw Chan K'awiil II (Martin and Grube 2000:53; see also Grube, Chapter 3, this volume). This six-decade-long gap in the erection of carved monuments indicates some acute sociopolitical difficulties at the site. It is also very possible that all the above-mentioned monuments of Dark Sun were destroyed, as was his residence, located in the Central Acropolis of Tikal (Harrison-Buck 2016:75). This destruction took place in antiquity and can be most probably associated with the violent end of the city that took place during the Terminal Classic. The crises and downfall of Naranjo's hegemony are seen not only in the halt of construction activity but also in the depopulation in the city epicenter. At this juncture, Naranjo's elites seem to be cut off from the major trade routes, as indicated by the absence of diagnostic Terminal Classic markers such as Fine Orange and Fine Gray ceramics in the ceramic assemblage of this center (Aquino 2007). Yet recent research at Naranjo indicates that many peripheral complexes experienced stable demographic and architectural growth during the Terminal Classic (Barrios and Fialko 2012; Fialko et al. 2007; Fialko and Barrios 2013). Some of their buildings were even decorated with carved stones featuring glyphs or supernatural beings that, according to Vilma Fialko and María Berta Barrios (2013:692) were taken from their original locations in the epicenter of Naranjo and reused by lesser elites during the Terminal Classic period—a clear sign of crisis and collapse of the political authority of the ruling Naranjo dynasty. This duplicates some of the evidence seen at other sites, including Dos Pilas, where Panel 19 was found displaced in a residential structure outside of the monumental epicenter (Palka et al. 1996). Similarly, at Caracol, following its Terminal Classic florescence, several monuments were displaced, especially the ballcourt markers (Helmke et al. 2006). The last carved monuments at Naranjo are Stelae 32 and 9, of which the first was dedicated in 820 CE to commemorate a palanquin event that took place at Ucanal, followed by a period-ending ritual possibly celebrated at Xunantunich—sites that exhibited increasing power in the Terminal Classic period (Grube 2004:209; Helmke et al. 2010:107–110; Martin and Grube 2000:83). Stela 9, on the other hand, does not bear any dates, but it depicts several figures grouped in two major registers. Such stylistic composition is rather typical for the period after 830 CE and thus may corroborate the Terminal Classic dating of this monument (Grube 2004:210; Martin and Grube 2000:83). Meanwhile the style of Stela 9 may reflect the devolving of royal authority with the rise to

power of the lesser elites, Stela 32 suffered from destruction of king's image—a pattern that appears at many Maya sites toward the end of the Classic period and may indicate rebellion, internal conflict, or external invasion (Harrison-Buck 2016; Helmke et al. 2010:99; Iannone et al. 2016a; see also Demarest et al., Chapter 18, this volume).

In the case of Nakum, after Stela 3, the corpus of carved monuments of this center grows exceptionally and represents a break with the past, especially in contrast with the Tzakol 3–Tepeu 1 centuries, which were marked by an absence of monuments. The very first Terminal Classic monument at Nakum is Stela 1, which was erected at the foot of a large pyramidal temple (Structure C) that flanks the western part of the Central Plaza. Stela 1 does not bear any scene but is covered with a single column of 9 glyphs (Figure 12.5a). One of the distinctive features of this monument is that it is heavily tilted to one side and yet the text was applied in plumb, suggesting that the inscription is a secondary addition to a stela that had initially been raised as a plain monument. A defective foundation led to partial subsidence of the stela over the years until it was eventually inscribed. The text commemorates the completion of the first *hotun* of *katun* nineteen, an event that was peculiarly recorded as a half *lahuntun* (a ten-year period). This corresponds to the 9.19.5.0.0 Long Count station of 815 CE. The king's name, Yax Mun? Chaahk, is followed by a still-undeciphered emblem glyph of Nakum, after which the king is referred to by a theonym, involving the mythic toponym, *nahho'chan* ("first five sky"). This place name is associated with a series of celestial deities and apparently designates the king of Nakum as being a person of this supernatural place (Helmke, Martin, et al. 2018:855–856).

In 849 CE another monument, Stela 2, was commemorated close to Stela 1 at the base of Structure D, the formal and primary entrance of the enormous Acropolis complex. The preserved fragments of the monument feature a single individual with a rich headdress (Figure 12.5b). A short text along the top of the monument refers to the Calendar Round of its dedication and mentions its protagonist, whose name is only partly legible. Nevertheless, the person bears the prestigious and rare *elk'in kalo'mte'* (or "east *kalo'mte'*") title. The monument commemorates a *katun* ending at 10.1.0.0.0, 5 Ajaw 3 K'ayab. The fact that one of Nakum's kings names himself as *elk'in kalo'mte'* is remarkable. Was he controlling a large portion of the eastern central lowlands at that time, or is this a manner of self-aggrandizement? It is still difficult to answer this question, especially as no mention to Nakum kings are found outside of this center during the Terminal Classic period.

The last Terminal Classic carved monument of Nakum is the recently

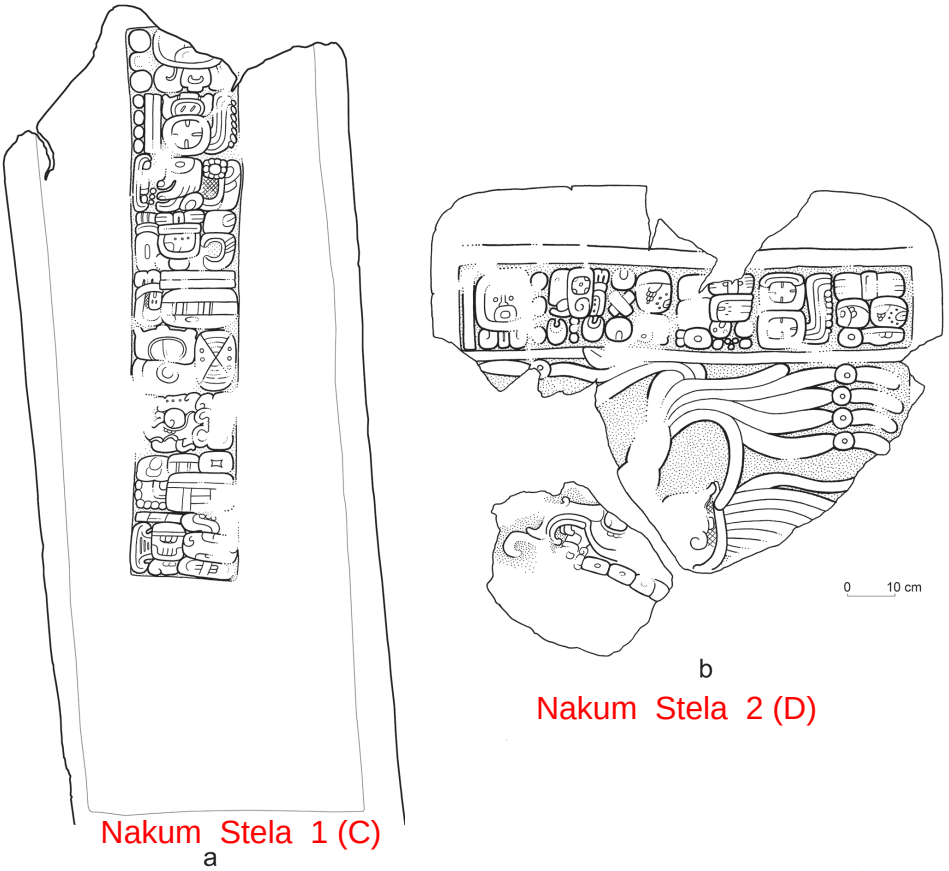

Figure 12.5. Ninth-century monuments from the Central Plaza of Nakum: (*a*) Stela 1; (*b*) Stela 2 (drawings by Christophe Helmke).

found Stela 5 that was dedicated in the first part of the ninth century. It was raised in the southwestern corner of the North Sector of the city, in front of the small Structure 82—a construction built of perishable materials on top of a large platform (Figure 12.6a). Stela 5 depicts two individuals who face one another and bear staffs or spears. The person represented on the right seems to be the dominant figure, with a long staff or spear, and the opposing individual bears a staff held across his body in a subordinate posture (Figure 12.6b). An eroded text in the upper register provides a record of two sentences, each headed by a Calendar Round date. Although heavily eroded, the initial date may commemorate the date 840 CE (10.0.10.0.0 6 Ajaw 8 Pop). The event in question appears to be written *ak'taj* ("danced")

and undoubtedly refers to the type of staff dance performed by the two individuals represented on the stela. As this stela was not erected in front of any of the major structures of the North Sector of Nakum, its placement is highly unusual. This abnormality may suggest that this stela served to commemorate a prominent member of an important noble family standing in front of one of the late Nakum kings. The appearance of a second person may be a clear sign of disintegration of the centralized authority, increasing power sharing with lesser elites, and the commensurate rise to power of the lower or secondary nobles or courtiers. A similar tendency is observed in the iconography of other Terminal Classic centers where the representation of a sole lord with royal regalia is frequently replaced by complex conversational and diplomatic, or at least negotiatory scenes involving simply dressed elites without the elaborate and traditional symbols of high status and power (e.g., Caracol, Ceibal, and the sites of the Central Peten lakes region) (see Grube, Chapter 3; Helmke et al., Chapter 7; A. Chase and D. Chase, Chapter 13, all this volume).

In this context we should also mention another important discovery that was made by Zoila Calderón, very close to Stela 5 within another residential complex, the West Group (Figure 12.6a). Inside one of the buildings of this complex (Structure 89) a masonry bench covered by a glyphic text was found (Calderón 2008). Its recent analysis indicate that it is a very late monument, possibly dated to the late ninth century (ca. 870–881) based on shared paleographic features of dated texts at Chichen Itza. The text is rendered in a highly idiosyncratic style with certain sign combinations defying clear reading as well as featuring compositions that reveal graphic reanalysis of signs (Figure 12.6c). The picture is otherwise impeded by the absence of comparable evidence and suitable yardsticks at sites where such late texts are absent. These script features are characteristic of the times and hint at shared spheres of interaction, although their incidence at Nakum is not necessarily evidence of northern presence or interference in the south, as these are autochthonous paleographic developments, continuous with those observed in the texts of Yucatan. Its discovery in a residence that was most probably inhabited by members of an extended family of lesser elites, far from the major epicentral complex of Acropolis with its prominent seat of local king, may be another indication of power sharing and growing position of lesser elites. The very late style of this monument indicates that Nakum continued its architectural and textual programs into the final part of the ninth century. That this very late activity was directed by lesser elites is implied by the find spot of the Structure 89 bench. Yet it remains to be determined whether they asserted

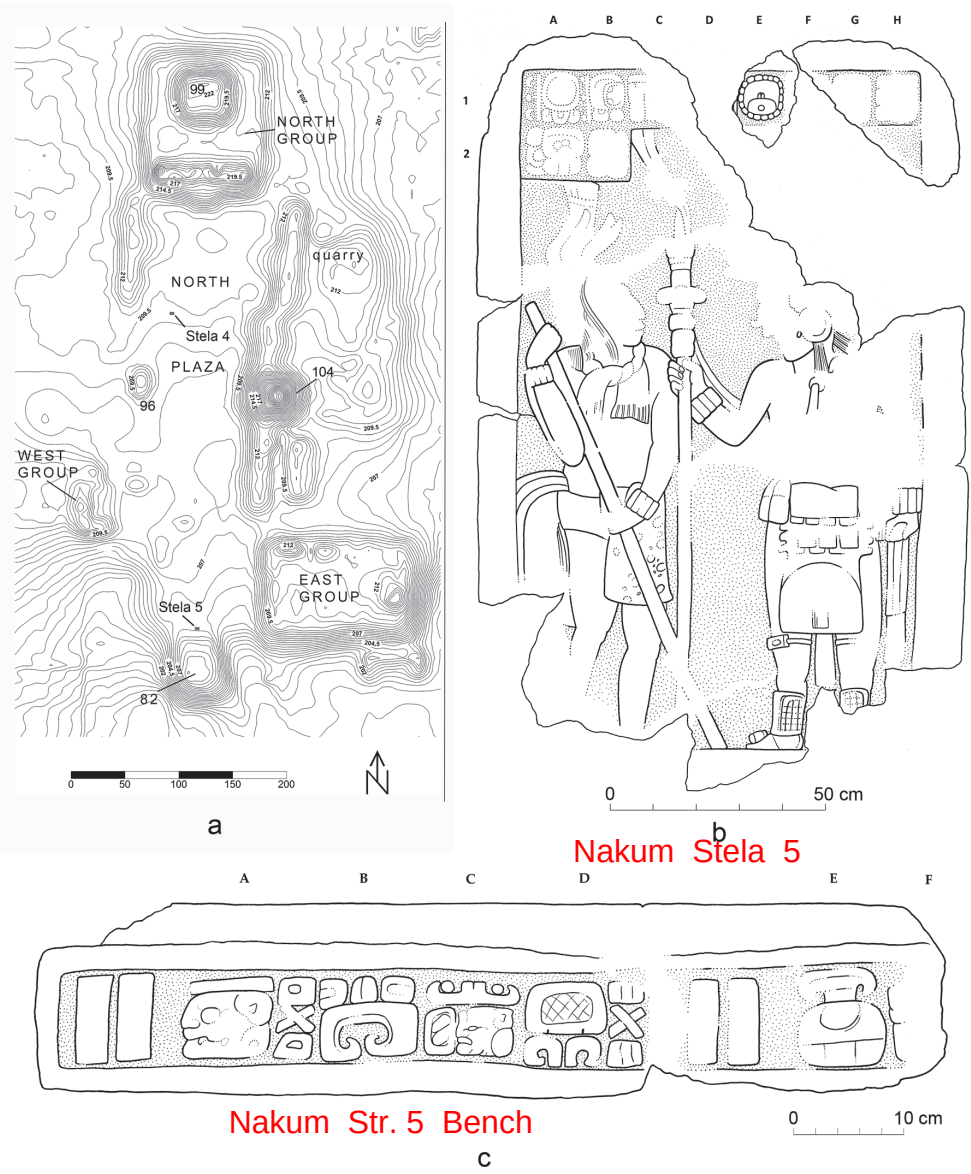

Figure 12.6. (*a*) View of the Northern Sector of Nakum featuring the location of Structure 82, Stela 5, and West Group, where a hieroglyphic bench has been found (map by the Nakum Archaeological Project); (*b*) Stela 5 (drawing by Christophe Helmke); (*c*) Hieroglyphic bench from Nakum Structure 89 (drawing by Christophe Helmke, made with the authorization of Ministerio de Cultura y Deportes de Guatemala).

their power exclusively over the North Sector and competed with established royal power, or whether these lesser elites ruled over the totality of the center from the North Sector.

The Aftermath: The Collapse and the Postclassic Period

Vestiges of Postclassic occupation, although found in several different locations throughout Nakum, are limited to the South Sector only with 95% of them recorded in the Acropolis—the largest residential complex of the Classic era. Nearly all evidence of Postclassic occupation is limited to the discovery of fragments of Postclassic ceramics inside or outside Classic period buildings. Almost all of them are sherds of the Pozo group, with only one large fragment of a vessel belonging to the Chompoxte group. The archaeological context of some of these findings indicates that people who left them reoccupied older, Classic period buildings, some of which were falling into ruin. The Postclassic ceramic assemblage of Nakum indicates a lack of continuity between the Classic and Postclassic periods and places the Postclassic occupation to the middle or second part of this period. Elsewhere (Źrałka and Hermes 2012:176–177) we argued that there must have been an occupational gap between the Classic and Postclassic periods at Nakum, comparable to the situation at Tikal (Culbert 2003:63), Copán, or Quirigua (Sharer 1985) and even Baking Pot (Hoggarth et al. 2014). An important question is, who were the Postclassic inhabitants of Nakum? To resolve this problem we should look further than Nakum. Studies by Grant Jones indicate that two major groups of Maya people can be identified in the Central Peten lakes at the time of the conquest: The Itza, with their famous capital of Tayasal in the west, and the still enigmatic Kowoj Maya in the east (who, according to their own tradition, came to this region from Mayapan). This situation most likely does not differ significantly from the geopolitical reality of the Postclassic period, as reflected by ceramic and architectural differences between the eastern and western parts of the Central Peten lakes region (Rice 2013:14). The Kowoj may not have migrated here from the north but might instead have returned to their ancestral lands (Rice 2013:14; Rice and Rice 2004:126–128). The same scenario is also proposed for the Itza, who are believed to have returned to their homeland after several centuries of living in northern Yucatan (Boot 2005). At Zacpeten, an island site situated on the lake of the same name, the Kowoj ostensibly constructed various new buildings during the Postclassic period with the use of old Classic period masonry; some Late Classic monuments were also relocated by these late

inhabitants to new, well-visible locales and were embedded into the exterior parts of the Late Postclassic buildings; these actions indicate close links between the Late Postclassic constructors and inhabitants of Zacpeten with the Classic period occupants of this place as well as clear disjunctions (Rice 2013:14–15).

Evidence of Postclassic occupation at both Nakum and Yaxha might also be connected with the Kowoj who could have visited these places during pilgrimages or temporarily settled into some of the abandoned structures. The possible northern origin of the Kowoj is interesting in the context of another line of evidence that we have at both Nakum and Yaxha. Among many different graffiti of Classic date, these sites bear examples that can be dated to the Late Postclassic period based on stylistic similarities to the Mixteca-Puebla or Postclassic International Style. We know that this style had four major subsets or components, one of which is centered in northeastern Yucatan and is well known from wall paintings discovered in sites such as Santa Rita Corozal and Tulum. People who created the Mixteca-Puebla style graffiti found at both Nakum and Yaxha were familiar with canons of formal codified art, and their northern origin (and, as such, some links with the Kowoj) is thereby likely.

Discussion and Conclusions

The data presented here indicate that Nakum became one of the most important Terminal Classic enclaves of the southern Maya Lowlands, comparable to such centers as Ceibal and Altar de Sacrificios as well as various sites of southeastern Peten and Belize (see Laporte 2004; Laporte and Mejía 2002; Masson and Mock 2004; Pendergast 1981, 1986; Tourtellot and González 2004; Willey 1973; Willey et al. 1965). Several contributors to this volume (see, e.g., Grube, Chapter 3; Inomata, Chapter 4; Demarest et al., Chapter 18) argue that political crisis spread rapidly across the southern Maya Lowlands, resulting in the almost total collapse of divine kingship by the beginning of the ninth century and followed by the short-time revival of some polities such as Ceibal (see Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume). It is hard to say whether Nakum followed the same scenario of political demise at the end of the Late Classic and reestablishing of its dynasty during the Terminal Classic, but such might have been the case. According to this scenario, transformation of the final years of the Classic era might have been characterized by the collapse of the local dynasty sometime after the erection of Stela 3 (in 771 CE) and the construction of Pyramid U, followed by a political

revival during the ninth century marked with the erection of Stelae 1, 2, 5 and commission of the hieroglyphic bench of Structure 89. Nevertheless, the existence of such a hiatus or political rupture at Nakum is difficult to trace archaeologically as we observe ceramic and architectural continuity toward the end of the Classic period.

Available archaeological data indicate that Nakum might have formed an important Terminal Classic polity controlling its surroundings along with local trade routes and establishing new trade contacts with more distant centers, including those from the northern Yucatan, as is evidenced by the presence of new architectural traits and iconographic elements at this site during the period in question. In the Terminal Classic assemblage of Nakum, the appearance of metates made of pinkish granite from Belize (just as in Terminal Classic Naachtun [Chloé Andrieu, personal communication 2014]), obsidian from various Mesoamerican sources (including Paredon in Central Mexico), alabaster, and imported ceramics (including vessels of the Altar Group) indicate that Nakum participated in long-distant trade and established new trade contacts.

Many small sites of the Triangle Park that showed evidence of important Terminal Classic occupation are situated in strategic and defensive locations in close proximity to Nakum (El Tigre, El Carmen, Fortaleza, Dos Estelas, and Sin Aliento; Chan 1999; Fialko 2005) and together might have formed a Terminal Classic polity headed by Nakum. The defensive location of such sites must have been an important issue in the turbulent times of the Terminal Classic. We should remember that defensive potential was an important settlement factor in the final part of the Classic era, marked with intensified warfare, and during the Postclassic (see Grube, Chapter 3, this volume); many important Terminal Classic enclaves or centers that were able to survive the period of collapse and crises to continue on toward the Postclassic (or that were reestablished politically) were situated in such locations (e.g., Ceibal, Altar de Sacrificios, Punta de Chimino, and many Central Peten lakes sites or some centers of the southeastern Peten; see Demarest 2004a; Rice and Rice 2004:130; Tourtellot and González 2004:76–77). To conclude, we argue that the short-term success of Nakum during the Terminal Classic period was dependent on different factors, such as (1) the proximity to important resources (sources of water, trade, and communication routes); (2) the considerable, if not complete, political and economic independence Nakum gained after the collapse of the former hegemons of this area—Tikal and Naranjo; and (3) the establishment of new economic and political alliances and contacts with Lowland Maya centers that were emerging at the end of the Classic era.

This might have resulted in accepting a new ideology that spread in Epiclassic Mesoamerica focusing on the cult of long-lipped wind deities including the feathered serpent, the serpentine aspect of the former. The appearance of a circular building at Nakum that might be connected with the rituals tied to this foreign pantheon (cf. Ringle et al. 1998), along with several late depictions of the feathered serpent present in local iconography (see Hermes and Źrałka 2012:193–194) may indicate that Nakum participated in a pan-Mesoamerican sphere of Epiclassic–Terminal Classic cults and ideas that were supposed to strengthen the power of the local elites. The location of Nakum close to such an important waterway as the Holmul River should not be underestimated, especially in light of growing data indicating severe droughts at the end of the Classic period across the Maya Lowlands (Gill et al. 2007; Haug et al. 2003; Hodell, Brenner et al. 2001; Hodell, Curtis et al. 1995; Kennett et al. 2012). The exact reasons for the eventual failure of the Nakum elites is not well known, although we should take into consideration some data indicating social problems, internal rebellion, or intrasite warfare as well as depletion of local resources. Signs of damage to at least two Nakum monuments should be remembered here also. Stela 3—the tallest Nakum monument—was clearly undercut at its base, as if someone was deliberately attempting to fell the monolith. Without a doubt, this act is the result of pre-Columbian activity since the partly chopped base appears on photographs featuring this stela taken by the first researchers who visited Nakum at the beginning of the twentieth century. Purposeful destruction of at least part of the image of the lord that embellishes this monument is also very plausible. Another carved monument, Stela 5, has evidence of intentional defacement of the heads of the lords (scratch marks and cross-hatched scrapes being especially well visible for where the face of the individual standing on the left once was). We should add to that the unusual placement of several burials found almost on the surface as if they were left unburied. One of them is NAP Burial 3, which was discovered in the context of a so-called termination ritual, close to many broken vessels and other artifacts scattered on the floor of a residence atop Structure 99. All these data may point to an outside attack or internal rebellion triggered by the local people trying to destroy the symbols of royal power toward the end of the Classic period. Recent data from many different Maya centers (Iannone et al. 2016a) may support this view as they show a widespread pattern of destruction and defacement of many carved monuments as well as evidence of termination, ritual, or otherwise (most of which may be in fact interpreted as vestiges of attack and desecration of residences and other important regal places) seen toward the end of

the Classic period (see Demarest et al., Chapter 18, this volume). Whereas the final pages of Nakum's history remain unknown, significant purviews have been made into the dynamic and turbulent final chapter of Nakum, allowing us to gain a better perspective on the Terminal Classic and the Classic Maya collapse in this region of the central lowlands.

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https://caracol.org/drs-chase/publications/
https://caracol.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ACDC2021-Transformation-of-Maya-Rulership.pdf

13

The Transformation of Maya Rulership at Caracol, Belize

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Classic period Maya rulers are distinctly tied to epigraphic statements of warfare and to hostile actions with neighboring and distant sites and polities. Long-term research at Caracol, Belize, provides substantial historic and archaeological information from which to view the changing nature of Classic Maya rulership. Based on both history and archaeology, we know that the results of these hostilities were impactful in both the physical and ritual realms. Research further indicates the dynamic nature of Maya polities; the size of Maya states varied over time, as did the nature of economic stratification. Caracol provides an excellent case example of rulers who practiced successful star wars against both Tikal and Naranjo in Guatemala, resulting in the incorporation of these two cities into the broader Caracol polity during the sixth and seventh centuries. Cementing these actions, two of Caracol's rulers, who we argue were divine kings, were buried in the sacred central precinct at Tikal. However, Caracol's further expansion was disrupted when Naranjo defeated Caracol in a star war in 680 CE. Even though Caracol's current ruler was able to return to the site after a 168-day hiatus, this act likely removed him from divine status, and the area controlled by Caracol appears to have been severely reduced. However, while there may not have been a divine king during the later part of the Late Classic period, this does not appear to have affected the general prosperity of Caracol's population, thus posing other questions about the infrastructure existing below the divine king. In contrast, the general prosperity of the site's inhabitants did decline during the Terminal Classic period at Caracol (post 798 CE), when there appears to have been an attempt to return to a form of divine kingship by a new power elite.

The attempted reassertion of divine kingship in the Terminal Classic period can be seen both in the iconography of the initial stone monuments for this era at the site and in the archaeological record. Iconography presents a stela-sized vision serpent with the initial Terminal Classic ruler, and the initial texts for this ruler are set in a ballcourt—a locus associated with the installment of kings—and refer back to Caracol's founder. The archaeology also indicates change. Late Classic tombs on the summit of Caana were ritually desecrated and then resealed, with the rooms above them being reused, suggesting that there was discontinuity in the ruling line. The material record associated with Terminal Classic elite palaces also indicates the restricted use by the ruling elite of ceramics, foreign finewares, and other artifactual materials that were not readily available to the general public. This represents a rupture from previous Late Classic period economic practice. It is also likely that the mode of rulership for the Terminal Classic period at Caracol differed from earlier forms. Terminal Classic reigns appear to span no more than a katun, and the associated monuments often portray scenes involving more than one individual, one of whom may be foreign to the site. We suspect that this is indicative of a new form of governance at the site. Thus, the conjunction of archaeological, iconographic, and hieroglyphic data from Caracol provide not only information on broader issues of Maya rulership during the Late Classic period but also on the transformation of Maya rulership in the Terminal Classic period, a transformation potentially related to political events elsewhere in the Maya Lowlands.

Classic Period Rulership at Caracol

Maya rulership at Caracol was dynamic rather than static, changing throughout the course of the site's history. Our understanding of these transformations is tied to an ever-growing body of archaeological data and may be illustrated by our changing view of the site itself regarding its scale, extent, and influence (e.g., D. Chase and A. Chase 2017). The epigraphic texts associated with stone monuments permit us to reconstruct a dynastic line for Caracol that involved some 31 rulers (based on K'inich Joy K'awiil being named on Ballcourt Marker 3 as the twenty-seventh ruler in line after the founder) and to gain insight into the names and deeds of many of these individuals. Archaeological data that have been recovered from Caracol and other Maya sites suggest that significant changes occurred in Caracol rulership during the early part of the Late Classic period and again toward the end of the Late

Classic period. Part of this change can be seen in Yajaw Te' K'inich II's adoption of a formal emblem glyph (K'uhul K'antu Maak) over the earlier use of only the Uxwitza' toponym and Uxwitza' Ajaw title (Helmke et al. 2006:16). While the K'uhul K'antu Maak emblem continued in use through the Late and Terminal Classic periods, iconography associated with the site's latest stone monuments reflects another shifting governing strategy and presumably differences in the role of the ruler.

It is generally assumed that Late Classic period Maya rulership is based in "divine kingship" (e.g., Freidel 2008; Freidel and Schele 1988; Freidel et al. 1993; Houston and Stuart 1996; Schele and Freidel 1990; Schele and Miller 1986; Thompson 1973; Webster 2002; see also Arnauld, Chapter 1; and Andrieu, Chapter 2, both this volume), but absolutely establishing divinity in the archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic records of the ancient Maya is difficult. Potentially complicating the issue is broader debate over the differences between "divine kings" and "sacred kings" (e.g., Brisch 2008a) and the implications that these distinctions have for ruling strategies of the ancient Maya (see Baron 2016; Kurnick 2016:15–16). Divine kings generally are associated with the gods and place themselves in a central role in the cosmos; this is different than kingship based on power or birthright alone, which does not necessarily place the ruler on a religious apex. As noted above, it also is likely that rulership and governance varied across space and time within the broader Maya area. Considering these factors and through combining epigraphic, archaeological, and iconographic data, we argue that these modifications were not limited to major transitions in Maya culture and that ancient Maya rulership at Caracol was continually transformed.

Like elsewhere in the Maya area, our understanding of Caracol's rulers is based largely upon carved stone monuments bearing iconography and texts. The two known references to the Caracol founder, an individual named Te' K'ab Chak, are both retrospective; they occur on Caracol Stela 22 and on Caracol Ballcourt Market 3, where this individual is positioned within the Early Classic period at 8.14.13.12.9 (331 CE; see A. Chase et al. 1991; Helmke et al. 2006). Archaeologically, the entire span of the Early Classic period (200–550 CE) is well represented at Caracol (A. Chase and D. Chase 2005a, 2006b, 2018). Burial deposits within Caracol's epicentral Northeast Acropolis span the time associated with Te' K'ab Chak. An interment in front of Caracol Structure B34 dates to approximately 150 CE and contained the prone body of a woman dressed in an Ixchel ("moon goddess") costume, with a mantle composed of over 7,000 shell and jadeite beads and associated with 32 ceramic vessels, several of which are related to Kaminajuyu whiteware (A.

Chase and D. Chase 2005a:Figure 1e; Rich 2003). A tomb from the summit of Structure B33, dating to approximately 400 CE, contained a woman with a shell bead necklace and four pottery vessels of standard Maya Early Classic form (A. Chase and D. Chase 2018:Figure 4). Intriguingly, a cremation (unusual for the Maya of Caracol) was placed in a small squarish sealed pit within the center of the plaza of the Northeast Acropolis; it may be contemporaneous with Te' K'ab Chak, based on a radiocarbon date (Beta-482497; Cal 220–345 or 370–375 CE) and certainly predates the epigraphically noted 378 CE incursion into the central Peten of Guatemala of Sihyaj K'ahk', who was related to "the ruling house of Teotihuacan" (Martin and Grube 2008:29). The Caracol cremation contained the burnt and fragmented remains of three individuals, 20 ceramic vessels, a partial metate, at least one mirror, a host of shell and jadeite beads, broken carved shell and bone, the shell tip for an atlatl, and a significant amount of Pachuca green obsidian; overall, the items and patterning in this interment can be related to Teotihuacan and suggests contact between these two centers at this time (A. Chase and D. Chase 2011).

Rulers following Te' K'ab Chak are not well established; their monuments are either unknown or were broken, buried, and sometimes re-erected. Two eighth-cycle monuments are known from Caracol's A Group. The upper part of an eighth-cycle stela with epigraphic texts was cached beneath a Late Classic altar on the summit of Structure A2 (Grube 1994b:Figure 9.5). The top of a second stela dating to 8.18.4.4.12 (400 CE) was recovered beneath a constructed terrace associated with the eastern platform in Caracol's A Group; it could be fitted to the top of Caracol Stela 20 (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004b:Figure 52). Unfortunately, apart from the Long Count date, the lower texts incised into circular cartouches are too eroded to read (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981:Figure 18b); however, the Long Count date from Stela 20 is situated within a bordered box like early texts from the Guatemala highlands (see Sharer and Sedat 1987). Later Early Classic rulers have been established from a series of stela, two buried and two re-erected, in front of Structure A4 (Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981:Figures 13, 14, 15). An early Copán ruler is also mentioned on one of these monuments (see Helmke et al. 2019). While not well known because of the eroded and partial nature of the associated texts, these individuals were likely quite important, especially as it is thought that Caracol supplied Copán with its initial ruler in 426 CE (Stuart 2007), something also supported by stable isotope analysis from the Copán tomb identified as being Yax K'uk Mo (Price et al. 2010).

Several important tombs dating to the later part of the Early Classic period have been recovered in epicentral Caracol, and it may be that these housed

the remains of early rulers at the site. While the upper version of Caracol Structure A4 was associated with a looted early Late Classic tomb, a buried version of Structure A4 contained another looted tomb of Early Classic date that yielded a cylinder tripod, a bowl, and jadeite mosaic fragments (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:11). A "double-decker" Early Classic tomb was also situated in the A Group plaza in front of Structure A6; the lower chamber held two basal-flanged bowls, one pair of shell earrings, 109 shell and jadeite beads, a set of jadeite earrings with associated pearls, a mirror, and a carved monkey head with inlaid shell and obsidian teeth (Clancy et al. 1985:Figure 146) thought to be associated with the ballgame; the upper chamber held one jadeite bead and 26 ceramic vessels, many of them lidded cylinder tripods (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:5). A third potential royal tomb from this time period was dusted with cinnabar and contained a pair of obsidian earrings on ceramic backings, two carved bone figurines, jadeite, mirrors, stingray spines, and spondylus shells, and 13 whole vessels (as well as three partial ones) were also excavated within Structure D15 (A. Chase 1994:Figure 13.4; D. Chase and A. Chase 2008b).

The early part of the Late Classic period has references to two of Caracol's greatest rulers. These were Yajaw Te' K'inich II, who acceded as ruler on 9.5.19.1.2 (553 CE), and K'an II (born 9.7.14.10.8 in 588 CE), who acceded as ruler on 9.9.4.16.2 (618 CE) and died on 9.11.5.15.9 (658 CE). The transition between these two rulers is not fully understood, but it appears that K'an II's brother, "Knot Ajaw," carried out some ritual duties for their dead father, Yajaw Te' K'inich II; Simon Martin and Nikolai Grube (2000, 2008) include this individual in the Caracol king list, but the texts from Caracol Stela 6 make it clear that he acceded only to a specific office and that he carried out his duties in "direct" association with "dead" Yajaw Te' K'inich II (D. Chase and A. Chase 2008b). Tombs with painted death dates on their walls or capstones bracket the reigns of these two rulers and are known from Caana (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:Figures 14 and 23, 2017; D. Chase and A. Chase 2017), the Central Acropolis (D. Chase and A. Chase 1996), and the Machete Terminus (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:Figure 37). However, we believe that the two Caracol rulers themselves occupy Burials 195 and 24 in the Tikal North Acropolis (A. Chase and D. Chase 2020b).

Initially beholden to Tikal (according to the epigraphy), a shell-star event in 562 CE carried out on behalf of Caracol ruler Yajaw Te' K'inich II served to catapult the city into a prominent political role in the southern lowlands. With Yajaw Te's death around 600 CE, it appears that there was some competition for the role of ruler at Caracol. Eventually, K'an II was enthroned

in 618 CE (although his first bloodletting event is placed at 593 CE when he was five years old). Many of K'an II's monuments were presumably placed at Naranjo after the conquest of that site in 631 CE, and it appears that he used Naranjo as a second capital (A. Chase and D. Chase 1998a; D. Chase and A. Chase 2003). If there were true divine kings, both Yajaw Te' K'inich II and K'an II would fall into this category. Both ultimately had themselves interred in Tikal's North Acropolis, presumably as part of an attempt to assert their extended family rights at that site (A. Chase and D. Chase 2020b; D. Chase and A. Chase 2017:213). In accord with other early state strategies (e.g., Feinman 2016), ideology and religious ritual were utilized as political tools by minimally K'an II to advance his political agenda. He erected several carved stone monuments at Naranjo. Just as ideology and religious ritual were important in establishing the right to govern, the effacing of monuments that had been placed at Naranjo by K'an II signaled the end of Caracol's political and ritual control of that city.

After the death of K'an II in 658 CE, we know little about the succeeding ruler at Caracol, K'ahk' Ujol K'inich II (Smoke Skull); he accedes to the throne in 658 CE and the last record that we have of him is his return to Caracol 168 days after a star war in 680 CE by Naranjo against Caracol's "three stone place." He had a relatively lengthy reign, but his minimally 24 years of rule are almost completely unrecorded. It is unknown what happened to him after his return to the site in 680 CE. Following Naranjo's successful star war against Caracol in 680 CE, at least four carved stone compositions relating to Caracol's K'an II were ritually destroyed. Pieces of these carved monuments were dispersed to Xunantunich (Helmke and Awe 2016a, 2016b), to Ucanal (Graham 1978), and possibly to other sites. Caracol-related monuments were placed out of order as the lower step of a hieroglyphic stairway at Naranjo (Graham 1978) and buried in building fill at that site (e.g., Tokovinine 2007:Figure 5). Interestingly, the star war in 680 CE would have been waged against Caracol's current ruler, K'ahk' Ujol K'inich II, and we have no known carved stone monuments for him at Caracol proper. He only appears in two stela texts, one of which dates to 672 CE (9.12.0.0.0 [prior to the Naranjo star war]), at the Caracol terminus of La Rejolla. Thus, if there were monuments relating to him in downtown Caracol, they likely also bore the brunt of Naranjo's wrath.

In spite of a stela erected in 702 CE for an unknown individual, few monumental or epigraphic records exist at Caracol for the 120-year period after the Naranjo star-war event. This is consistent with what occurs at both Tikal and Naranjo after they suffered star-war events (A. Chase 1991; Houston 1987,

1991). Even though stone monuments and hieroglyphic texts marking rulership were largely absent at Caracol during the eighth century, the archaeological record from the site indicates that this was a time of great prosperity (D. Chase and A. Chase 2003, 2004b, 2017), suggesting that the shared Caracol identity and market economy that was in place at the beginning of the Late Classic period continued largely unabated (D. Chase and A. Chase 2004b, 2014) without the presence of divine kingship.

Terminal Classic Rulership at Caracol

There was a concerted effort to re-establish the visible record of rulership on monuments at Caracol at the start of the Terminal Classic period (or ca. 798 CE). However, the form that Terminal Classic leadership took appears to have differed from what had been in place earlier at the site (see Table 13.1). This conclusion can be deduced from archaeological, iconographic, and epigraphic data. The epigraphic record contains only very limited detail about the lives of individual rulers and instead seemingly focuses on events that may have been participated in by several sites. It also contains written records of individuals who were not rulers but who could still use the Caracol emblem (A. Chase et al. 1991). The iconographic imagery suggests that, while warfare was still carried out and prisoners were taken, there was a strong focus on alliances and engagement with former enemies (A. Chase and D. Chase 2015a). The archaeological record indicates a major disjunction with the site's previous patterns of integration (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a); there were clearly changes to the market economy and a potential decrease in the number of middle status level individuals. The elites living in palaces enjoyed the use of a foreign ceramic sub-assemblage that was not shared with the rest of the population. Stable isotope analysis indicates that the high-status palace diet (high in both maize and protein) continued within these complexes. Architectural modifications to Terminal Classic palace buildings, in which central access was blocked with buildings or walls, also suggests that the elite were isolating themselves from the rest of the population.

Looking at the various databases from Caracol in greater detail also provides grist for understanding the evolution of kingship at the site. During the Terminal Classic period, there was substantial construction activity at Caana and a number of the site's other palaces (A. Chase and D. Chase 2007). Excavations throughout Caana indicate that the summit plaza for this complex was raised 4 m sometime after 700 CE (A. Chase and D. Chase 2017). Raising this summit meant that the latest versions of both Structures

Table 13.1. Caracol, Belize: Terminal Classic dates, monuments, and iconography

Long Count	Short Count	CE Monument	Iconography	Event	Ruler
9.18.9.5.9	6 Muluk 2 Kayab	799 BCM 4	text only	Accession	K'inich Joy K'awil
9.18.10.0.0	10 Ahaw 8 Sak	800 St.11	standing ruler ceremonial *bar witz*; 8 captives	10-year	K'inich Joy K'awil
		800 Alt. 23	two prisoners on "thrones"	10-year	
					K'inich Joy K'awil
		800 BCM 4	text only	10-year	K'inich Joy K'awil
(9.18.12.10.14)	8 Ix 7 Sip	803 BCM #	(missing)		K'inich Joy K'awil
9.18.13.5.14	8 Ix 7 Pax	803 BCM 3	(implied)	same event as first ruler of Caracol	K'inich Joy K'awil
9.19.0.0.0	9 Ahaw 18 Mol	810 St. 18	rearing snake over prisoner	katun	Ruler XI?
		810 Alt. 22	two prisoners on "thrones"	katun	unknown (CRC emblem)
		810 MCW 2	text	katun	unknown
		810 St. 8	standing ruler ceremonial bar	katun	unknown
9.19.9.9.15	12 Men 8 Pax	819 Alt. 12	two figures on "thrones" "alliance"	"chi-ta-ha" event (also NAR32, TIKL.3T, CLK89)	Ruler XI
					(Papamilil)
9.19.9.15.0		Naranjo St.32		"palanquin" with Ucanal's Papamalil	
?	12 ? 11 Mol	Alt. 12		"ch'ak kul mutul"	Ruler XI

(*continued*)

Table 13.1—*Continued*

Long Count	Short Count	CE Monument	Iconography	Event	Ruler
9.19.9.17.0	1 Ahaw 8 Sek	820 Alt. 12		"ku-ba-ha"	Ruler XI
		St. 19	(A6-B6 ??)		
9.19.10.0.0	8 Ahaw 8 Xul	820 St. 19		katun	Ruler XI
		820 Alt. 12		katun (future event)	(Ruler XI)
		820 Alt. 13	3 figures (2 standing; 1 kneeling) "alliance"	katun	Ruler XI (Papamilil)
9.19.12.4.19	8 Kawak 17 Yax	822 Alt 13		"ch'ak" vs. "makalte"	
10.0.0.0.0	7 Ahaw 18 Sip	830 Alt. 13		katun (future event)	?
10.0.2.13.11	10 Chuwen 19 Pax	833 MCW 1	indiv. with fan prisoner	"huli-wa"	Ruler XII
10.0.5.0.0	13 Ahaw 13 Wo	835 MCW 1		5-year	Ruler XII
10.0.19.6.14	13 Ix 17 Sek	849 St. 17	2 seated indivs "alliance"	"u patwa kab"	Ruler XII
		849 Alt. 10	3 standing indivs "alliance"		Ruler XII (MCW1 indiv)
10.1.0.0.0	5 Ahaw 3 Kayab	849 St. 17		katun	Ruler XII
10.1.10.0.0	4 Ahaw 13 Kankin	859 St. 10	text only	10-year	?
10.2.15.0.0	8 Ahaw 8 Mol	884 Alt. 26	2 seated indivs "alliance"	15-year	?

Source: Table compiled from Beetz and Satterthwaite 1981; A. Chase and D. Chase 2015; A. Chase et al. 1991; Grube 1994b, 1998; Helmke et al. 2006; Houston 1987.

B19 and B20, temples that arose from the earlier summit plaza surface, also underwent architectural modifications to articulate with the latest summit plaza surface. For Structure B20, this involved recreating its front (or western side) with a new frontal terrace and stairway. Structure B19 also received a foreshortened stairway with a central balk; on either side of this new stairway tandem-room vaulted structures were built, the roofs of which articulated with Structure B19's substructure pyramid. Each of the tandem-room shrines at the base of the latest version of Structure B19 was constructed over a Late Classic tomb; each of these tombs had been built as the summit was being raised. Because each was associated with an entry stairway, they were presumably filled sometime after 700 CE (the time of the summit raising). During the Terminal Classic period, starting around 800 CE at Caracol, both of these tombs were re-entered and the contents of the chambers were ritually broken and burned with the chambers themselves being partially infilled with construction materials. An articulated hand was tossed into the fill of the western chamber. After this activity, the floors above these tombs were sealed and the rooms continued to be used.

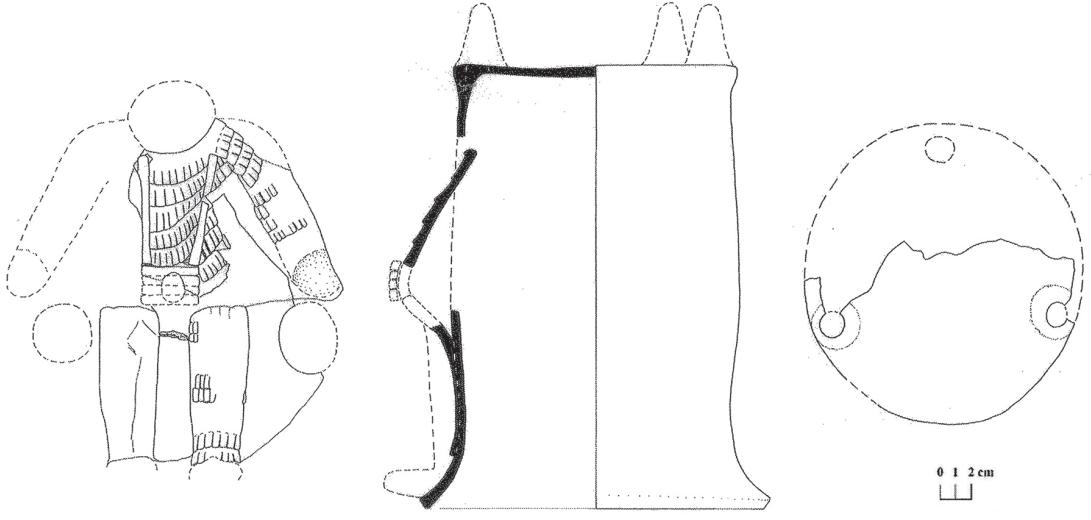
It should additionally be noted that the western Structure B18 was built atop earlier palace buildings that were also associated with the latest summit floor on Caana (an even earlier palace building located directly beneath Structure B18 was associated with the earlier summit floor 4 m below the latest plaza level). This massive western structure was the latest construction built on the summit of Caana, and the giant mat symbol on its northern substructure may reflect the building's use in governance, perhaps representing the late adoption of a council house at Caracol like those seen in the northern lowlands (Arnauld 2001; Bey and May Ciau 2014). However, if that were the case, situating this kind of structure on the Caana summit signals that the governing strategy was different from that in the northern lowlands, where such a structure would have been both "available and visible to the larger community" (Bey and May Ciau 2014:315), as opposed to separate from the populace in a restricted location at the summit of Caana.

Rebuilding efforts were taking place throughout the site epicenter immediately prior to the ultimate abandonment of the site. Final use of Caana occurred in the later part of the Terminal Classic period. The doors to the eastern palace rooms directly abutting the base of Structure B19 were blocked, and these rooms were infilled with dirt and rock; this was done before final abandonment, and a series of complete plates and vases were left upon the floors in both rooms of this building. Other rooms in the northeast quadrangle were still used until the final abandonment and had the remains of

storage vessels on their floors; a burner base with a modeled body of an individual in cotton armor was recovered from this northeast courtyard (Figure 13.1a); and an unburied six-year-old child was recovered from the inner doorway of the south building in the northeast plaza. The western building in the northwestern courtyard (west of Structure B19) produced a complete pedestaled barrel censer (Figure 13.2d) similar to earlier one recovered in both the B19 lower tomb (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987:Figure 22d) and in the core of Structure B20. Another larger flanged and lidded barrel censer (Figure 13.2e) and an unburied lidded cache vessel were recovered from the interior of the summit building immediately south of Structure B20. An adult human femur was recovered in the southwest summit plaza corner. While two flanged censers (Figure 13.2a) were set at the base of the northern Structure B19, the floors associated with the summit building also produced a series of vessels and the human remains of two children as well as an unsealed cache of five ceramic vessels (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a:Figure. 16.2).

More reconstructable ceramic material was recovered broken on the floor in the eastern midrange alleyway, and one of the eastern front rooms produced two complete large jars and one complete large serving bowl still resting on the associated bench (A. Chase and D. Chase 2019:Figure 2). The remains of two modeled-carved vessels (Belizean-style vessels; see Helmke and Reents-Budet 2008) were recovered from the central entryway through the midrange building. The presence of this in situ on-floor debris suggests the rather sudden abandonment of Caana. Radiocarbon dating of burning on the floors of epicentral buildings indicates that abandonment took place at approximately 895 CE (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a:349, Table 13.1). The ritual destruction of the tombs at the base of Structure B19, along with other evidence both for a shift in governance to shorter katun-based reigns involving multiple individuals and for economic change that led to greater disparity at the site, may indicate inter-elite competition between families for the right to rule the site during the Terminal Classic era, as has been argued for interfamily politics at Tikal (Haviland 1981, 2015; Laporte and Fialko 1990). This situation may also have resulted from internal squabbles among second tier administrators, who had maintained Caracol following the Late Classic Naranjo star war. Alternatively, it may represent the imposition of foreign rule at the site. That the site's emblem glyph was still used on carved monuments, however, would likely indicate that there was some kind of continuity.

Architectural modifications undertaken to most palace groups at Caracol during the Terminal Classic included making their access more restricted.



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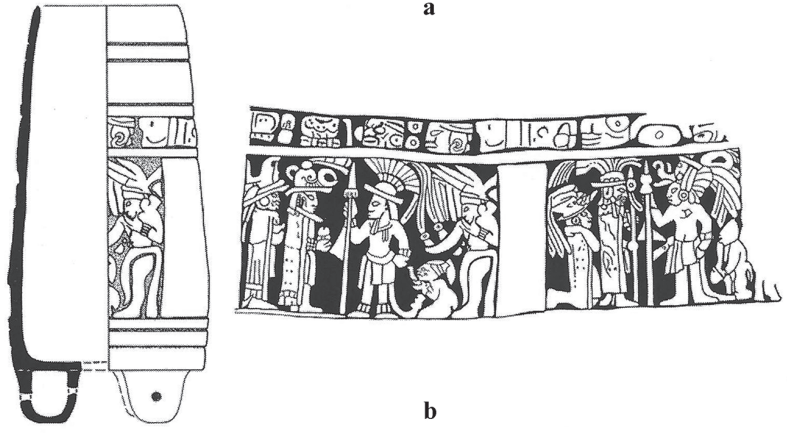

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Figure 13.1. Terminal Classic ceramics from Caracol: (*a*) Warrior burner or stove from the northeast courtyard floor on the summit of Caana; (*b*) Modeled-carved tripod cylinder associated with the front of Structure C142.

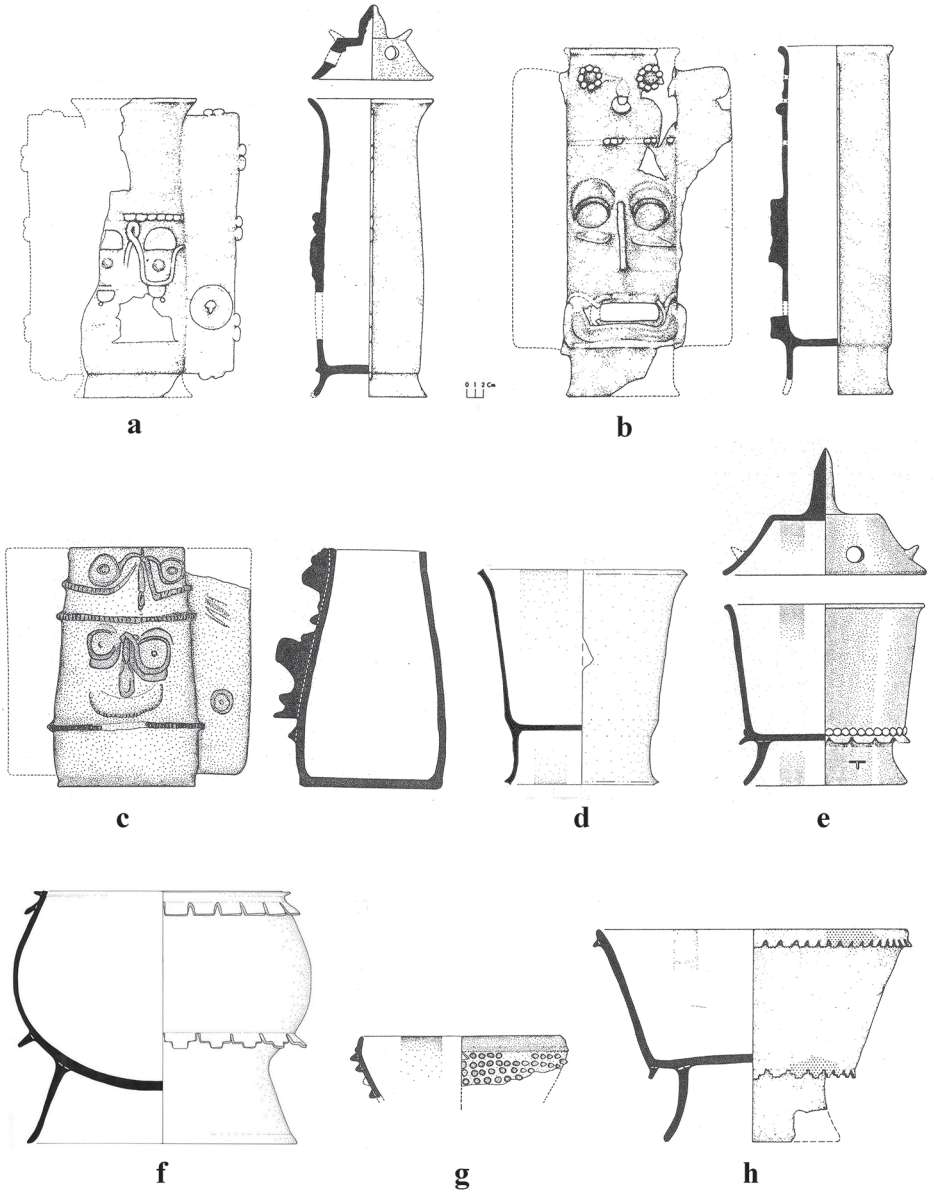


Figure 13.2. Terminal Classic *incensarios* from Caracol: (*a*) Flanged and modeled cylinder censer with associated lid from the base of Structure B19; (*b*) Flanged and modeled cylinder censer from the interior summit floor of Structure A3; (*c*) Flanged and modeled cylinder censer from the floor of the front room of Structure A6; (*d*) Pedestal-base barrel censer from inside the western building in the northwest courtyard on Caana; (*e*) Pedestal-based flanged barrel censer with lid from interior room of building directly south of Structure B20 on Caana; (*f*) Pedestal-base and flanged cauldron associated with front step of Structure A31; (*g*) Incurved bowl censer with appliques from the interior of Structure A6; (*h*) Pedestal-base brazier from the interior summit floor of Structure A3.

This can be seen in the residential patterns on the top of Caana (A. Chase and D. Chase 2001, 2017) as well as in other epicentral residential groups. The central access doorway to the Barrio suite of palace buildings (west of Caana and the B Plaza) was walled up, forcing individuals to gain admission to the inner plaza area through narrow passages from the sides. Rebuilding efforts in the Northeast Acropolis (directly to the west of Caana and Structure B20) blocked both southern access and the view of the summit plaza; two newly constructed range buildings on the south side of the summit plaza offered no direct entry and forced restricted access only from the sides of this acropolis. However, it is also clear that architectural modifications beyond access restriction were ongoing at the time of abandonment for stockpiles of building materials were recovered in three different locations and unfinished construction efforts were also in evidence in three other locations (A. Chase and D. Chase 2007:Figure 6).

The Terminal Classic period also saw a split between the ceramics used by those in the elite residential groups and those used by the bulk of the population. The ceramics used in elite contexts only had a very limited distribution among the rest of the site's population (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a, 2005b, 2007), suggesting both a breakdown in the market system with a corresponding increased disparity in status groupings and the participation of the site's elite in broader social and political spheres that lay outside of the site itself. Whatever the case, internal exchange systems were likely disrupted. However, external exchange continued to be reflected in the archaeological record, especially in artifactual assemblages associated with the elite palaces, which included prestige items (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a) and even sea fish (see Teeter and Chase 2004). Some of the ritual censers that were used at the time of abandonment (Figure 13.2) indicate widespread Mesoamerican ties; specifically, larger pedestaled vessels that can be linked to northern Belize and to northern Yucatan (figure 13.2f) are in association with Caracol Structure A31, as is a fine-orange Mixtec-style hand censer (A. Chase and D. Chase 2013a:Figure. 4.6a,b,d). Additionally, design elements found on fine-orange and modeled-carved pottery (e.g., Figure 13.1b) are similar to those found at other sites both in eastern Belize (Helmke and Reents-Budet 2008) and farther afield (e.g., Smith 1958).

The final abandonment of Caracol appears to have taken place abruptly. Besides complete vessels and other artifacts on the floors of buildings, uncollected sheet refuse also accompanies many of the epicentral buildings (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a, 2019). Structures A6 and B6, both public buildings, were heavily burned (A. Chase and D. Chase 1987). Artifactual

materials from the two buildings on the south side of the B Plaza—specifically, in Structure B4, which contained in situ ceramic vessels within the building and sheet refuse to its front, and in Structure B6, which contained in situ vessels, stone points, and a significant lens of burning—also point to a sudden and probably violent end. As noted above, three unburied children were recovered on the floors of Caana's final buildings. Two of these children were recovered inside Structure B19 in what is assumed to be a final ritual offering. A third was recovered on the interior floor of one of the palace complexes in a decidedly nonritual context. Besides the unburied child in the summit palace room of Caana, at least two unburied bodies were recovered at the base of Structure B28 at the eastern extant of the epicentral B Plaza near Caracol Stela 25 (Figure 13.3b); also with these bodies were a dozen extra mandibles, possibly representing a warriors necklace; in our estimation, that these bodies were left in situ and unburied points to a final violent confrontation. The relocation of Altar 23 (Figure 13.3e) from the same locus by the stabilization project in 2001 CE also resulted in the recovery of two additional bodies in this general area; strontium analysis of one of these individuals (value equals .70724) indicated a non–local origin of this person from somewhere south of Caracol (Freiwald 2011:341–344). This would suggest that at least one of the unburied individuals in Caracol's B Plaza was not originally from the site. However, it cannot be determined whether the unburied individual was from a foreign military force who attacked the site and was killed by its defenders or if the individual was simply a foreign migrant living at Caracol who met an untimely end. Whatever the case, the archaeological data indicate that the epicentral final abandonment was fairly rapid and likely associated with warfare.

Besides the archaeological data that reflect Terminal Classic period turbulence at Caracol, the known epigraphic record also establishes the relatively short tenure of the Caracol rulers during the Terminal Classic era, usually on the order of 20 years, possibly suggestive of a katun rotation (A. Chase et al. 2009:181). There is also a change in the political content of the inscriptions during the Terminal Classic period in that they do not record the biographies of rulers (birth, accession, parentage) (Grube 1996; Chapter 3, this volume). Finally, there also appears to be the use of the Caracol emblem glyph by individuals other than the ruler (e.g., Altar 22 [Figure 13.4c]; A. Chase et al. 1991). The epigraphic changes are further reflected in the iconography of the latest monuments at Caracol, which shift from a focus on single individuals to one emphasizing multiple people. The earliest Terminal Classic monuments focus on either a half-katun ceremony or the accession

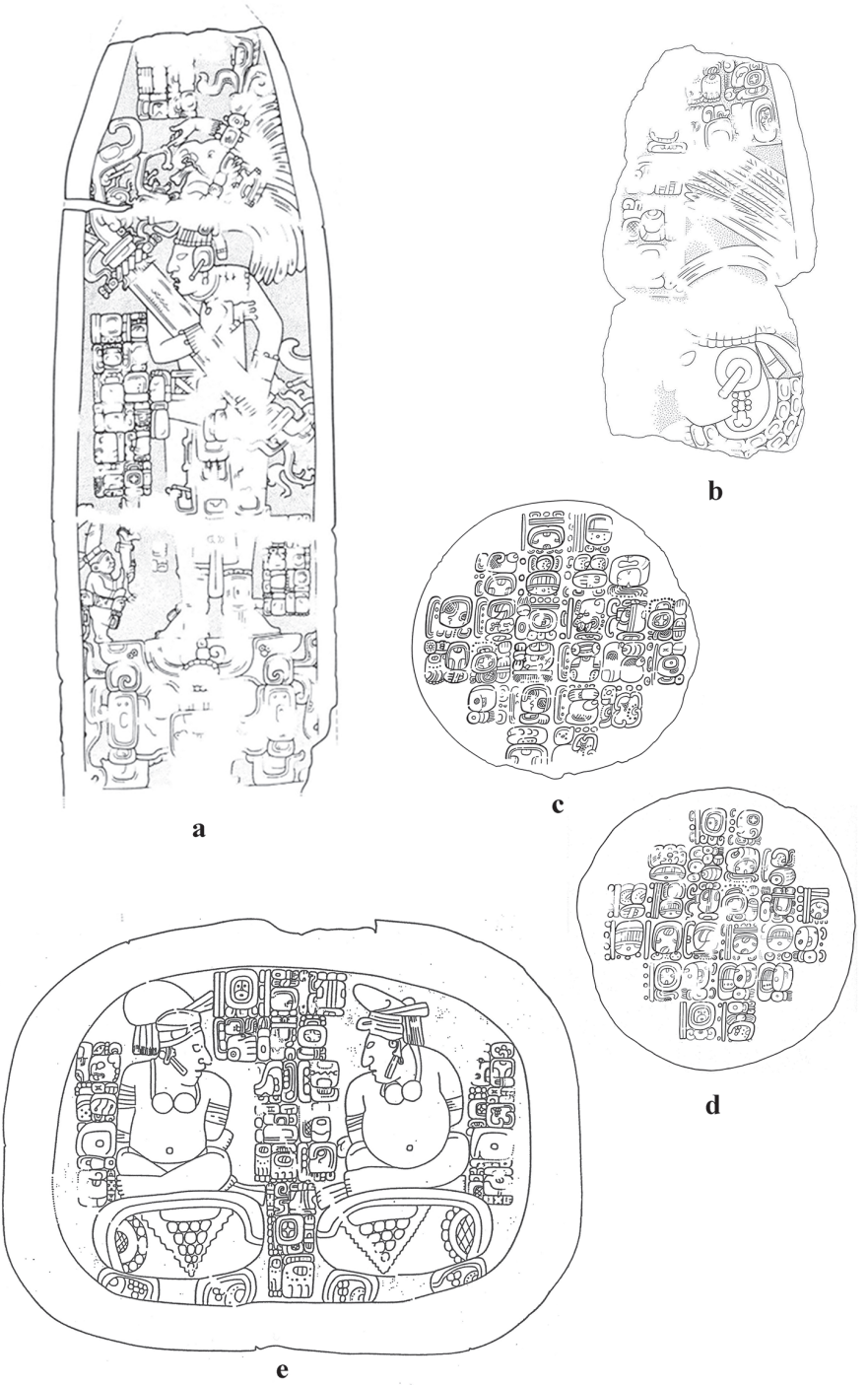


Figure 13.3. Caracol carved and incised monuments dating to 9.18.10.0.0 (800 CE): (*a*) Stela 11; (*b*) Stela 25; (*c*) Ball Court Marker 3; (*d*) Ball Court Marker 4; (*e*) Altar 23.

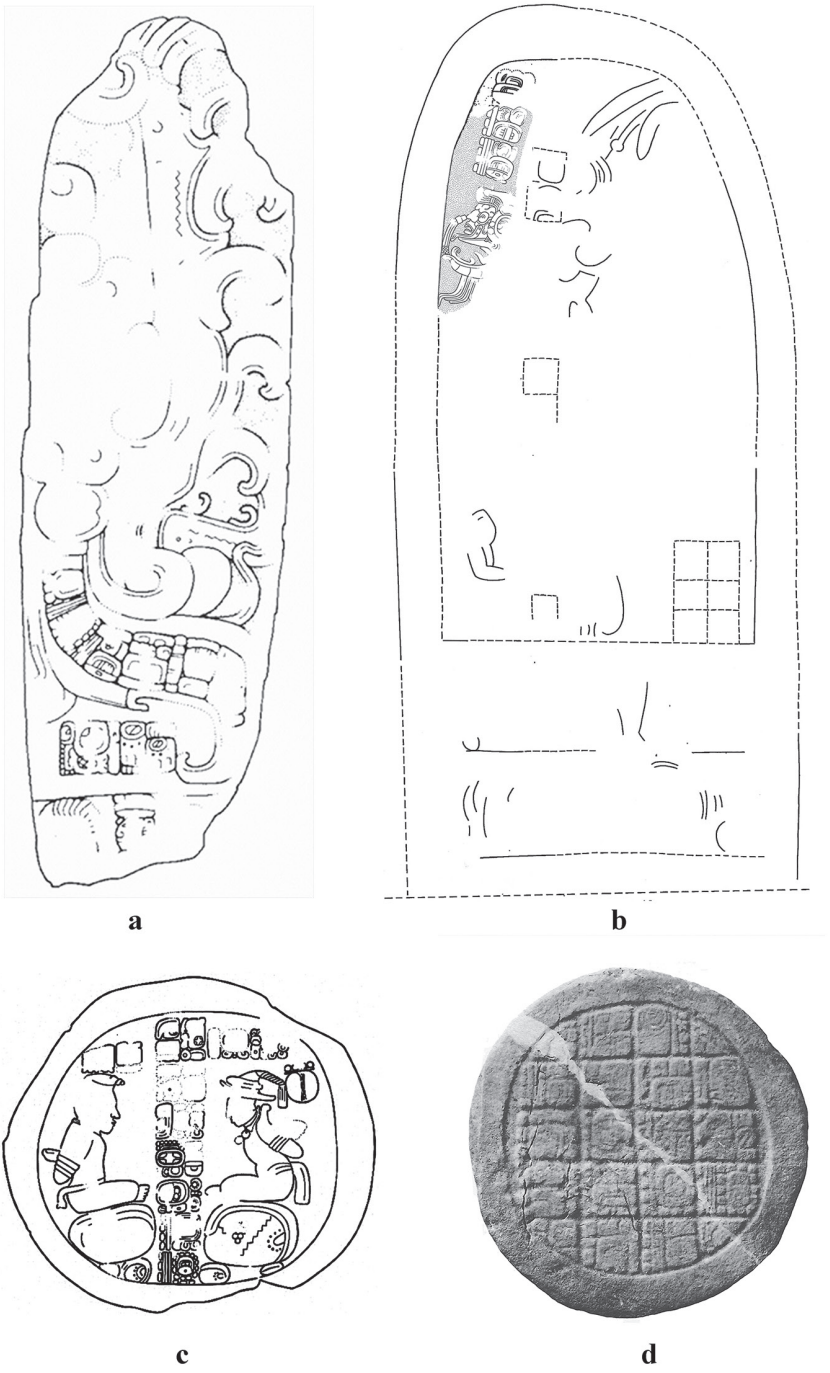


Figure 13.4. Caracol carved monuments dating to 9.19.0.0.0 (810 CE): (*a*) Stela 18; (*b*) Stela 8; (*c*) Altar 22; (*d*) Hatzcap Ceel Altar 2.

of K'inich Joy K'awil (Figure 13.3); his monuments in the B Group ballcourt contain only text and make reference to Caracol's first ruler (e.g., A. Chase et al. 1991; Helmke et al. 2006), something appropriate for the re-establishment of divine right to govern.

Accession stelae showing rulers holding ceremonial bars are in evidence through 820 CE (Figures 13.3a, 13.4b, and 13.5a), but none are known from Caracol's Tenth Cycle (Figure 13.6) monuments. Ceremonial bars have been interpreted as the accession icons that position incoming rulers within the center of Maya cosmology (Clancy 1994). The lack of a ceremonial bar on later Terminal Classic monuments may be interpreted as representative of a significant change in the cosmology related to rulership; this is consistent with much of the other Terminal Classic iconography found at Caracol. Caracol Stela 18, dating to 810 CE, portrays a rearing serpent (a vision serpent or possibly a centipede; see Taube 2003) positioned above a captive (Figure 13.4a); if a serpent, one might also wonder if Caracol is not making reference to its position in a reborn "snake kingdom." Paired bound prisoners are in evidence on monuments dating to 800 CE (Figure 13.3e) and in 810 CE (Figure 13.4c); a single bound prisoner occurs on Hatzcap Ceel Altar 1 dating to 835 CE (Figure 13.6a). After 820, however, most Caracol monuments portray scenes of alliance, usually between two or more figures. In the scenes that are carved on these stones, figures are sometimes seated on "thrones" (e.g., Caracol Altar 12; Figure 13.5b) in scenes very reminiscent to those found on Sahcaba and Pabellon Modeled-Carved pottery (e.g., Adams 1973:Figure 16d and 16e; Smith 1958:Figure 44m). One of the paired figures portrayed and named on Caracol Altar 12 dating to 820 CE (Figure 13.5b) has also been identified as an individual known as Papamalili of Ucanal, who also occurs in texts at Naranjo (Grube 1994b:95). In the last pairing of individuals on a Caracol monument, Altar 26 dating to 884 CE, the Caracol lord is gesturing in alliance or submission to the other individual (Figure 13.6e; see also A. Chase and D. Chase 2015a) Thus, we would see the iconographic pairings as representative of alliances and relationships often with nearby foreign individuals, reflecting the probable participation of Caracol's elite in broader political interaction before the site's final abandonment (something also confirmed in the latest elite ceramics).

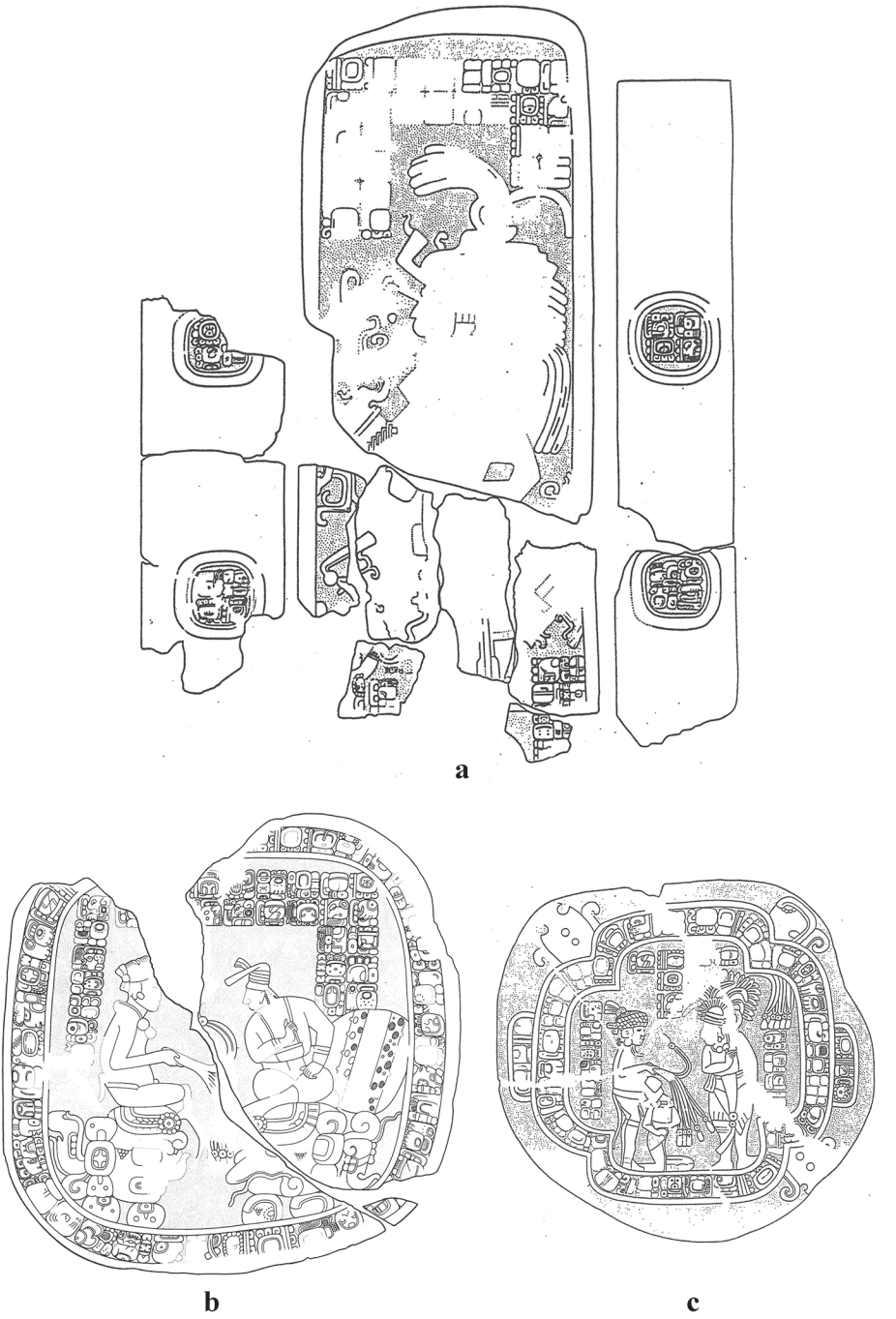


Figure 13.5. Caracol carved monuments dating to 9.19.10.0.0 (820 CE): (*a*) Stela 19; (*b*) Altar 12; (*c*) Altar 13.

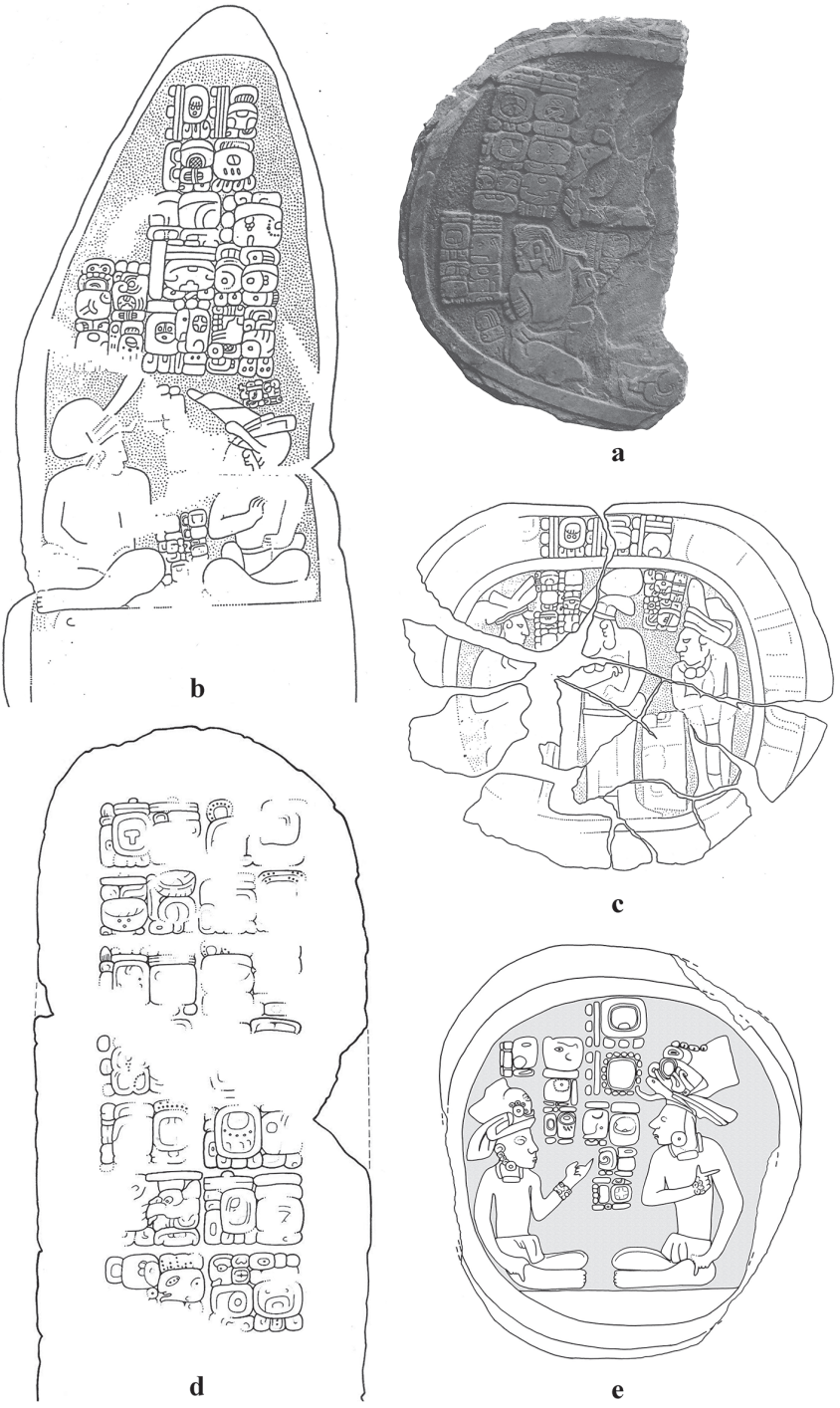


Figure 13.6. Caracol carved monuments dating to the Tenth Cycle: (*a*) Hatzcap Ceel Altar 1 (10.0.5.0.0; 835 CE); (*b*) Stela 17 (10.1.0.0.0; 849 CE); (*c*) Altar 10 (10.1.0.0.0; 849 CE); (*d*) Stela 10 (10.1.10.0.0; 859 CE); (*e*) Altar 26 (10.2.15.0.0; 884 CE).

Conclusion

We argue that Maya kingship at Caracol was constantly changing. Whether kingship was always divine or sacred is not clear. However, certain of Caracol's rulers were more powerful than others, specifically those at the beginning of the Late Classic period in 550 CE. When the site was defeated in a star war in 680 CE by Naranjo, it is likely that any existing divine kingship came to an end, for at least a time, given that the epigraphic records across sites suggests that star wars had severe consequences on minimally the elite of the affected sites. Yet the archaeology at Caracol also makes it clear that the loss of the ruler did not negatively impact the overall prosperity of the site. But Caracol kingship surely changed after 680 CE. Only 100 years later do we see evidence of a concerted attempt at Caracol to reintroduce the memorialization of rulers on stone monuments. And an argument can be made that the rearing snake on Caracol Stela 18 is representative of the deification of the ruler. Yet the epigraphic texts, the subsequent iconography, and the archaeological record all suggest that these later Caracol elite were disconnected from the rest of the site's population and more focused on exterior political relationships, leading to a breakdown in internal site economy (D. Chase and A. Chase 2020). We have earlier suggested that Caracol was part of a broader hegemony at the time of the Maya collapse (A. Chase and D. Chase 2004a:366), and our review of the current data indicate that this earlier suggestion has merit. It is also evident that Caracol's kingship in the Terminal Classic era differed in significant ways from its early Late Classic period manifestation.

Perhaps most interesting is the correlation of the material well-being of the population at large with powerful dynastic rulers. Even though Caracol's greatest period of prosperity began under the authority of powerful and potentially divine early Late Classic rulers, this prosperity continued in their absence (or at least during a period of hieroglyphic silence) following Caracol's 680 CE defeat by Naranjo. And while it is possible that this continued prosperity was possible because of the short time—only 168 days—before Caracol's ruler re-established his legitimacy (and took back his "three stone place"), the lack of corresponding dynastic monuments during the following century is striking, as is the change in iconography when stone monuments were re-introduced to the site. Caracol's overarching prosperity declines and economic disparity ensues only with the later Terminal Classic rulers' attempts to restore dynasty after 798 CE. No matter the issues of governance, if Caracol's Terminal Classic rulers were indeed attempting to assert

themselves as divine kings, then divine kingship did not always offer positive benefits for the population at large. An ancient reminder of the fragility of even the most resilient cities, Caracol demonstrates the dynamic nature of governance within one polity and the impact that changes in rulership can have on human lifeways.

IV

THE NORTHERN TRAJECTORY

14

Stranger-Kings in Northern Yucatan

WILLIAM RINGLE, TOMÁS GALLARETA NEGRÓN,
AND GEORGE BEY III

> This kind of identification [of kingship] with powerful others is interesting in light of the question, of urgency especially to historians, of whether traditions of immigrant kingship actually happened, or at least reflect such happenings in a fantastical way. The suggestion of this history is: not necessarily. As indigenously formulated, the stranger-kingship may be a structure without an event.
>
> Sahlins 2008:189

Something is different about kingship in northern Yucatan. This is probably due in part to the deep regional roots of social complexity, roots we now know extended well back into the Middle Formative period (e.g., Anderson et al. 2018; Gallareta Negrón 2018; Castellanos and Ceballos Gallareta 2018). Even then, the north was notably different, being, for instance, almost wholly aniconic throughout the Formative period, and thus kingship may initially have assumed an independent trajectory. Although a fuller record is desirable and individual cases vary, a continuous tradition of monumental architecture connects these developments with the cities of the Late Classic, the megalithic platforms of Izamal and elsewhere being notable examples (Mathews and Maldonado Cárdenas 2006). Northern kingship thus cannot be reduced to the legacy of refugee dynasts from the south or invaders from beyond the Maya realm.

And yet colonial documents, sometimes seemingly written to confound future scholars, often insist on the introduction of kingship from afar, in contrast to a southern emphasis on lengthy dynastic pedigrees.[1] In this respect, northern Yucatan is like-in-kind to the origin narratives of the K'iche' and Kaqchikel Maya or, earlier, the introduction of rulers with Teotihuacan affiliations at Tikal, Kaminaljuyu, Copán, and elsewhere during the fourth and fifth centuries CE. An interesting question is therefore why the north

became fertile ground for the establishment of "stranger-kings," (or at least stories about them), kings who were in some cases said to introduce not only more autocratic forms of rulership but also significant changes in religious practice. Most familiar are the coming of K'uk'ulkan and the sagas associated with the families who claimed "Mexican" ancestry of one form or another—the Cocoms, Cupuls, Xiu, and Canuls—and an origin in one of the places sacred to Toltec memory, such as Nonohualco or Suyua.[2] If these sources are to be believed, these foreign identities were most probably introduced in the north during the Terminal Classic period and then continued to be maintained and contested throughout the remainder of the prehispanic period, informing, for instance, the rivalry between the Xiu and Cocom factions. Subsequently, they have provided fodder for endless scholarly debate over their historicity, with few signs of any emerging consensus.

Less well known are stranger-kings coming from within the lowlands who make no claims to non-Maya ancestry. The Big and Little Descents mentioned by Bernardo de Lizana (1893:Chap. 3), Diego López Cogolludo (1957:Book 4:Chap. 3:178), and the second chronicle of the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel* (Roys 1933:139) are in this vein, but a particularly interesting example is Ek Balam, leader of the ruin of the same name, the ancestral Talol (De la Garza et al. 1983). The story relates the coming of this king and his retinue from the east. Ek Balam founds the city by erecting its principal building, his nobles constructing the other four, although it is implied that the site was already settled. After 40 years of wise and just rule, Ek Balam begins to abuse his subjects, who eventually kill him, though some repent the act afterward. His son He Blai Chak is then installed as king and rules for an unknown period. As his life nears its end, he asks his sons to create a stone image in his likeness and to worship it after his death, a practice theretofore unknown.

This account has several traits of classic stranger-king narratives as discussed by Marshall Sahlins (2008, 2014) and others. Ek Balam comes from the east, a direction laden with mythological resonances of origins. His second title, "Coch Cal Balam," translated as "lord over all" in the "Relación de Ekbalam (1579)" (De la Garza et al. 1983:2:138), suggests he achieved a political unification not possible before his reign, perhaps the major theme of stranger-king narratives. Initially, he and his followers were "pure," in keeping with the notion that stranger-kings were often responsible for renovating a society and purging it of corruption. He and his captains are said to have been responsible for the five major platforms around the main plaza, perhaps a reference to the five cosmic directions. In short, and given the lack of

mention of earlier leaders, the implication is that Ek Balam was responsible for the imposition of the institutions of kingship.

As Sahlins notes, another theme is that stranger-kings introduce dangerous forces into the body politic, which, while subduing factionalism, often remain untamed and liable to erupt into new cycles of violence. Thus, Ek Balam is named for the night and the most fearsome Mesoamerican predator and, like many stranger-kings, is said to have been a sorcerer. Inevitably, the inherent violence of the stranger-king asserts itself, as Ek Balam, after ruling justly, becomes overweening and is put to death. Yet, rather than celebrating their newly won freedom, his subjects almost immediately regret their act, for the stranger-king has done his job, the institutional framework is reestablished, and a new king is named, He Blai Chak. Yet this king too is something of a stranger, for he pursues further religious transformation, introducing the worship of a monument in his image (interestingly, at the point he is about to become an ancestor).

The discovery of the Panel of 96 Glyphs at Ek Balam, found in Room 29-sub of the Acropolis (GT-1), suggests there is some truth to this narrative. According to Alfonso Lacadena García-Gallo (2003, 2005), the mural details the coming (*huli*) of a lord, Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek, a northern *kalo'mte'* and *k'uhul ajaw* of an unknown site whose emblem glyph appears to be a raccoon.[3] Interestingly, a phonetic spelling of Ek Balam occurs in an uncertain context (E1), after the *huli* verb and before the name of Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek. His name also incorporates Kan/Chan Ek, a name prominent among the last leaders of Noh Peten / Tayasal (Jones 1998) and also one of the "Toltec" names on piers of the Great Ballcourt of Chichen Itza (Schele and Mathews 1998:245).

Rather than assuming rulership himself, in 770 CE Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek confers kingship on Ukit Kan Le'k, the founder and occupant of the principal tomb of the acropolis, the final passage concluding with "*i patlaj Talol ajaw* 'then he [Ukit Kan Le'k] was made king of Talol'" (Lacadena García-Gallo et al. 2015).[4] Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek (or his representative) thus plays an auxiliary role akin to those of Siyah Kan and Spearthrower Owl at Tikal (Martin and Grube 2008:29–32). Ukit Kan Le'k at some point, perhaps then, also assumes the title of *kalo'mte',* often regarded as the highest of Maya titles.

Although it is true that the buildings of the center primarily date to the Late Terminal Classic periods, when the site as a whole experienced considerable growth, our work indicates Ek Balam was a major center from the Late Formative onward, with substantial megalithic structures antedating its Late Terminal Classic apogee. We found no evidence for a population intrusion

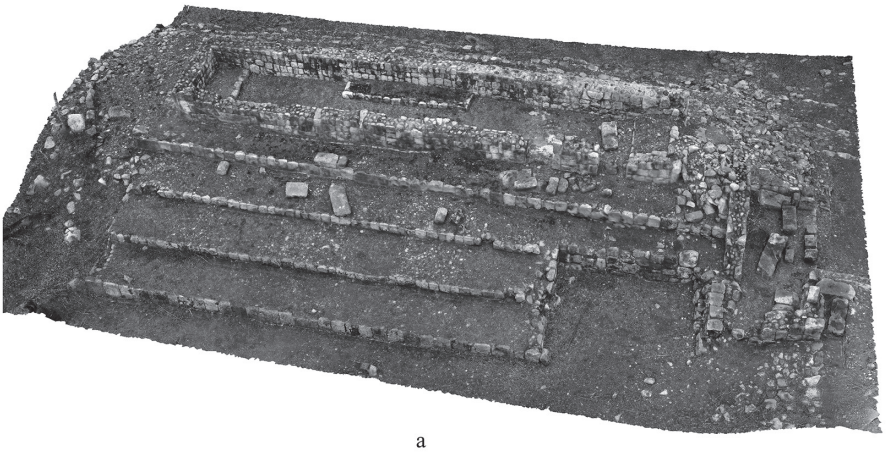
in our pottery collections (Bey et al. 1998; Bond-Freeman 2018), although the monuments do show resemblances to those of Coba and Oxkintok (Ringle and Bey 2001). Ukit Kan Le'k was thus either a stranger-king himself or was the local beneficiary of kingship conferred by a *kalo'mte'* from elsewhere.[5] The suggestion by Lacadena García-Gallo and colleagues (2015) that his father was a nonroyal would further mark him as an outsider.

The tensions between local interests and the increased concentration of power represented by new forms of kingship, as expressed in the story of Ek Balam, seem symptomatic of broader developments across Yucatan, as this chapter explores. The question remains of whether such events are actually visible archaeologically and affected the course of history or whether, to quote epigraph opening this chapter, stranger-kingship may be a structure without an event, manifestations of largely internal changes in authority later recast as an imposition from without.

Stranger-Kings of Western Yucatan

Western Yucatan, the area occupied by the Puuc and Chenes archaeological cultures, is also the source of prominent stranger-king narratives, specifically those concerning the Xiu and Canul families. According to the *Chilam Balam of Mani,* "The Tutul Xius had been established to the west of Zuyua for four *katuns;* the place they came from was Tulapán" (Craine and Reindorp 1979:138–139), but later they are said to have settled at Uxmal under the leadership of Hun Witzil Chak or Ah Suytok Tutul Xiu (Kowalski 1987:60). The *Crónica de Calkini* (f. 36) also claims an origin of the Canul family from west of Zuyua, although they claim to have come into Yucatan from the east (Okoshi Harada 2009:87).

The chronicle dates for these migrations have never made much sense archaeologically, for they can hardly refer to the original peopling of the Puuc. Our research in the eastern Puuc has demonstrated that vast masonry platforms were being built by the Middle to Late Preclassic along the base of the Puuc at Xocnaceh (Gallareta Negrón 2018) and within the Valle de Yaxhom at sites such as Muluchtzekel and Yaxhom, now being investigated by Ringle and colleagues. But clearly our study area experienced a Late Classic demographic surge, the earliest stage of which is marked by the construction of what we call EPCCs, or Early Puuc Civic Complexes (Figure 14.1a; Ringle et al. 2001). EPCCs consist of a rectangular or subrectangular arrangement of buildings enclosing a plaza often built at or near ground level rather than on a raised platform. Masonry is in the Early Puuc style, but the defining



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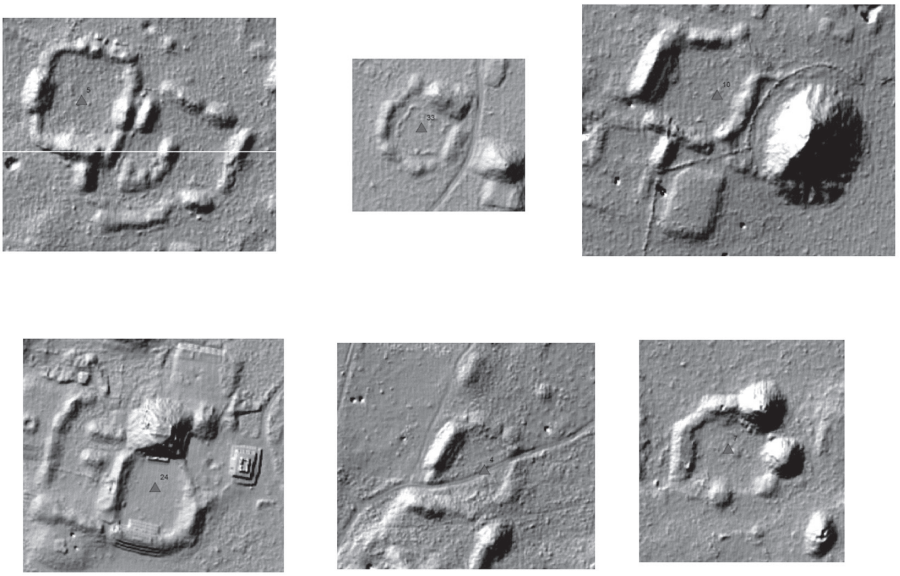

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Figure 14.1. Early Puuc architectural types. (*a*) Kiuic Str. N1015E1015, the *popol nah* of the Grupo Yaxche EPCC (Photoscan 3D image by William Ringle); (*b*) Examples of EPCCs in recent lidar imagery of the eastern Puuc (courtesy of the Bolonchen Regional Archaeological Project, images by William Ringle).

feature of the EPCC is that one end of the plaza is invariably occupied by a long hall, usually a single room, with multiple entrances framed by masonry piers or columns, sometimes seven or more. These structures have a long history in Yucatan and are almost certainly the *popol nahs,* or council houses mentioned in the ethnohistorical literature (Bey and May Ciau 2014). In the Puuc, small stepped pyramids sometimes face these buildings or are at right angles to them, but in the better-known cases, such as Kiuic and Labna, these are later constructions encasing earlier buildings. The suggestion of post-occupancy commemoration is reinforced by the connection of some EPCCs to later palace groups by means of causeways, as again is the case at Kiuic and Labna, and by their continued maintenance for an extended time after being supplanted by more lavish administrative quarters.

EPCCs are identifiable at many eastern Puuc sites, including Chac II, Sayil, Xcanacruz, Kabah, Sabacche, and others—in fact, at nearly all the larger sites we have visited in the eastern Puuc. In the western Puuc, a clear example is the Grupo Principal of Xcalumkin, unusual in possessing several long halls with column entrances.[6] Pierre Becquelin and Dominique Michelet (2003:138–144; Michelet 2002:81–84) argue these are pre–Early Puuc in date, roughly 650–725. This agrees well with a radiocarbon date with a one-sigma range of 650–680 CE from beneath the floor of the Kiuic *popol nah,* N1015E1015, whose use life probably extended for some time into the eighth century. Other *popol nahs* we have observed are clearly in the Early Puuc style, such as Str. 7 of Labna, a long hall with a similar floor plan (though with end rooms) and a facade consisting of a broken medial molding, deduced from the excess length of rectangular medial molding stones (Gallareta Negrón 2013:35). Some sites (Huntichmul, Chac II) have multiple EPCCs suggestive of successive courts, while others, like Xcalumkin and Yaxhom, have multiple *popol nahs* within a single EPCC, possibly reflecting more complex political hierarchies.

EPCCs are easily identified in recently acquired lidar imagery covering about 240 km^2 of our study area (Figure 14.1b). To date, our sample numbers 38, of which about 9 have been mapped in detail. None of these are dramatically larger than any other, with the possible exception of Yaxhom. A crude estimate of the size of each realm might be around 6 km^2, but the amount of vacant terrain between centers suggests that the actual average was far less. Thus, Michelet's (2002) contention that political command in the region around Xculoc and Xcalumkin was a network of petty realms can be confirmed for a wider area to the east during the early Late Classic.

These groups suggest that councils formed an important component of early Puuc political life. Charlotte Arnauld (2001:395) suggests these represent a system of shared power, yet this was not rule by council, for EPCCs are usually attached to administrative or administrative/residential buildings, either as part of the complex, as at Kiuic or Labna, or in the near vicinity. This is the case of one of the two Huntichmul EPCCs, which lies at the foot of a steep hill. At the top of the hill, reached by a ramp, is an Early Puuc building with a broken medial molding whose front is partially encased by a later enlargement. The central doorway of this building was spanned by a lintel depicting a single noble (Pollock 1980:Figure 586) and bearing what may be a pseudo-glyph text. This suggests the polity was the realm of a petty lord whose supporting cohort composed the *popol nah.* (In this respect it is interesting that texts from Xcalumkin, perhaps 50–100 years later but still within the Early Puuc style, continue to claim only minor titles such as *sajal.*)

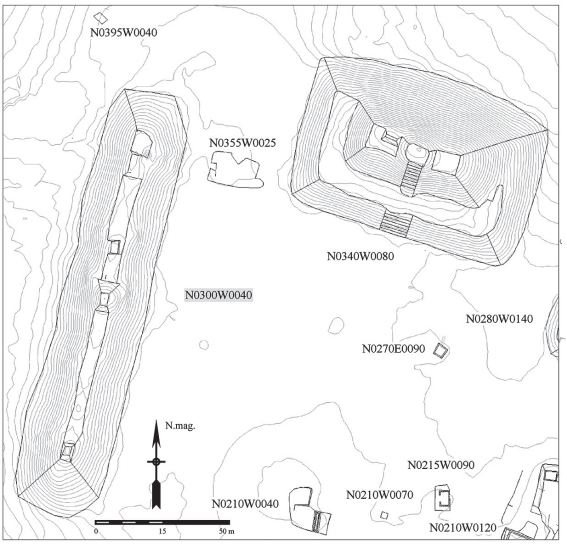
This emphasis on council houses and quadrangles is something that persisted throughout the Classic period in the Puuc as well as on the northern plains. The construction sequence of the Pajaros complex at Uxmal is illustrative (Huchim and Toscano H. 1999). Architecturally this group belongs to a significantly later period, probably the generation before the construction of the House of the Governor-Ballcourt-Monjas triad. It began as a long-range structure decorated with colonnettes and Tlaloc panels, probably a royal residence or administrative building. Two structures then were built off its northwest and southwest corners to define the patio. The southern of these is a long colonnaded hall, perhaps again a council house, although with several rooms along the rear wall.

Eventually the complex was converted to a quadrangle by construction of a fourth building, completely enclosed the patio save by access through a portal vault. This complex demonstrates the connection between the earlier EPCCs and the quadrangles seen in later Puuc sites, most spectacularly the Monjas quadrangle, but also at Oxkintok and Kabah. Thus, councils played a significant role throughout the Late Terminal Classic period and beyond. Indeed, long open-fronted, C-shaped structures, possibly descended from *popol nah* halls, seem to be the predominant civic structures from the immediate post-monumental period. At Huntichmul, the Grupo Chan Chich, which is being investigated by Rebecca Hill, is a quadrangular group consisting of several such C-shaped structures.

The Northern Plains

Similar developments can be seen on the northern plains, where *popol nahs* were also succeeded by C-shaped structures at the end of the Terminal Classic period, such as Ek Balam Str. GS-12 (Arnauld 2001; Bey et al. 1997). Yet northern *popol nahs* reflect a somewhat different trajectory than those of the Puuc. In the 1990s we were able to partially excavate Ek Balam Str. GT-20 (see Bey and May Ciau 2014). Also a long hall fronted by a broad staircase, it was strikingly like N1015E1015 of Kiuic in having multiple doorways formed by piers. In both cases several of these doorways were later walled up to restrict access. GT-20 seems to have been relatively early in the architectural sequence, although it was apparently kept in use for a considerable time, but during the Terminal Classic hypertrophic, examples of the single hallway appeared at sites such as Dzibilchaltun, Edzna, and Kumal-Yalcoba, a site 17 km to the SSE of Ek Balam (Figure 14.2; Arnauld 2001; Ringle and Bey 2008). Kumal-Yalcoba Str. N0400E0040, for instance, is over 160 m long and 8.5 m high but unfortunately is so badly collapsed that its floor plan cannot be determined (Figure 14.2a). A clearer example is Str. 44 of Dzibilchaltun, excavated and consolidated by Ruben Maldonado Cárdenas (2001).[7] This 130 m long platform, whose north side is almost entirely covered by a staircase, supports an elongated (115 m) single gallery with over 35 entrances(Figure 14.2b). It may have supplanted an earlier stage of the adjacent Str. 42, originally a long hall with 21 entrances, a slab vault, and a single rear entrance (Maldonado Cárdenas et al. 2002:67, 82). Maldonado Cárdenas (2003:52) opts for a general Terminal Classic date following construction of Str. 42 and contemporary with the final stage of Str. 45 along the west side of the Central Plaza.[8]

As Maldonado Cárdenas (2003) notes, Dzibilchaltun Str. 44 bears a strong resemblance to the Nohochna of Edzna (Figure 14.2c). Antonio Benavides (personal communication 2008) notes that while the base of the latter has rounded corners, and thus possibly general Peten affinities, the superstructure was in use and may have been built during the Terminal Classic, given the heavy deposits of ceramics from that period found during clearing of its overburden. Approximately the same length as Str. 44, at 110 m, it too has a stairway across the entire length of the basal platform and over 20 entrances, although in this case a central wall divides a front hall from a symmetrical rear hall, and the halls are divided near the midpoint. The Nohochna lies across from and faces the principal palace of Edzna, the Edificio de los Cinco Pisos, enlarging on the theme seen in some of the early EPCCs.



a

b

c

Figure 14.2. Hypertrophic examples of *popol nah* architecture. (*a*) Kumal, Yucatan (Map by William Ringle); (*b*) Str. 44 of Dzibilchaltun (Photograph by William Ringle); (*c*) The Nohochna of Edzna (Photograph by William Ringle).

Two other changes seem to parallel the expansion of the *popol nahs.* One is the construction of ballcourts at these sites. At Ek Balam, GT-8-9 occupies a prominent space in the central plaza.[9] Excavation by the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia project confirmed our suspicion that the GT-8-9 ballcourt had been attached to the rear of an earlier Late Classic structure. Later another building with Puuc-influenced architecture was attached. Capstones 1 and 2 from this structure indicate construction dates of 841 and 844 CE, respectively (Lacadena García-Gallo 2003), the latest known hieroglyphic dates from the site. However, a fragmentary ballcourt ring bearing only a *baktun* coefficient of 9 indicates construction of the ballcourt itself close to the investiture of Ukit Kan Le'k (Leticia Vargas, personal communication 2008). The ballcourt from Dzibilchaltun, just south of Str. 44, is also likely to have been part of its early Terminal Classic expansion since an inset stairway similar to those of Strs. 44 and 36 was inserted into the west half of the ballcourt. Ceramics were predominately Terminal Classic with a minor admixture of Sotuta (Maldonado Cárdenas and Acevedo 2006). Its orientation is nearly north–south, the same orientation as the GT-8-9 ballcourt at Ek Balam and those of Chichen and Edzna, while traditional courts typically skew significantly from the cardinal directions. The Edzna court shows a further parallelism in that it was constructed close to the Nohochna, the "super *popol nah.*" Ceramics indicate it was a relatively late construction, confirmed by the use of Puuc veneer (Benavides 1997:70). Like Ek Balam, the court was attached to earlier structures, indicating they were not part of the original design.

The second Terminal Classic innovation was the introduction of writing at both Dzibilchaltun and Ek Balam. The textual record at Dzibilchaltun appears to begin with a ruler known as Uk'uw Kan Chaak, recorded on Stela 19, on a lintel, and on a deer bone recovered from a Chemax black-on-slate funerary *olla* possibly containing his cremated remains (Maldonado Cárdenas et al. 2002:90). Although no dates occur in his texts, Maldonado Cárdenas and colleagues (2002:93, 94) argue that they antedate Dzibilchaltun Stela 9, which belongs to a successor and dates to 10.0.10.0.0 (840 CE), also the date of Ek Balam Stela 1.[10]

We suggest that lying behind these events was the conferral of the title of *kalo'mte'* on both Ukit Kan Le'k and Uk'uw Kan Chaak. Although we do not know how the latter became a *kalo'mte'*, it probably involved external authority, and for that reason Uk'uw may also be considered a stranger-king.[11] We further suggest that this new office was not only a more exalted form of

kingship but brought with it the right to invest others in office in ceremonies, marking a new level of regional political consolidation.

Investiture may have involved the ballgame, as seems to have also been the case at Chichen Itza and Uxmal and was probably true for other high-ranking northern cities. Thus, the ballplayer panels recovered near Ichmul de Morley, midway between Chichen Itza and Ek Balam, seem to mention two kings from Ek Balam, yet our surveys found no ballcourts at Ichmul (Graña-Behrens 2002; Grube et al. 2003:II-21, II-30; Smith et al. 2006). This would parallel the situation at Labna, where ballplayer figures once adorned the roof comb of the Mirador pyramid but, lacking a local court, must have played elsewhere. Ek Balam's role as a place of investiture may be indicated by a glyph on Stela 1, G5 glyphic block just before the emblem glyph, which can be transcribed as T32.86:700, ***K'UHUL****-?-nal.* Although T700 does not have a firm reading, it seems to graphically represent the act of seating or enthronement given its presence at Palenque in contexts associated with investiture (Stuart 2005b:82). Thus, the glyph block may be glossed as something like "holy/sacred/honored seating place."

Thus, these cities appear to mark the emergence of regional hierarchies claiming authority over significantly larger areas of the northern plains, an authority marked by the presence of a *kalo'mte'* and his ability to crown client kings, facilities to house an expanded court, and sponsorship of ballgames involving players from beyond the limits of a given city.

The Terminal Classic Configuration

The challenge to a heritage of more consultative rulership posed by rapid demographic expansion, increasingly powerful paramounts, and an expanding "middle class" has strong parallels in the Puuc. There an explosion in the construction of vaulted residences seems to be reflected in an increase in house symbolism. The portal vault on the west side of the Pajaros group, opposite the Adivino, is an example in which full-sized thatched houses modeled in stone frame the entrance. The portal vaults of Labna's Arco and the south wing of Uxmal's Monjas group are both flanked by imitation thatched huts (Ringle and Bey 2001), which originally contained seated nobles. Like the Pajaros group, the south Monjas wing is positioned directly opposite what was probably the major administrative building. This spatial distance suggests they represent the houses of the nobles composing a secondary tier of political decision making (see Ringle 2012 for further discussion).

Even the offices of paramount seem to reflect a reluctance to proclaim unalloyed authority. Tomás Gallareta's (2013:289) identification of a throne room in the central patio of the Labna palace demonstrates an insistence on representing central power in the form of triadic arrangements. Not to be confused with the triadic arrangement of platforms in the southern lowlands, we refer here to a central room or set of rooms flanked by two symmetrical wings, wings often incorporating house symbolism. Once recognized, this pattern can be seen to cut across a broad swath of the north and north central lowlands.

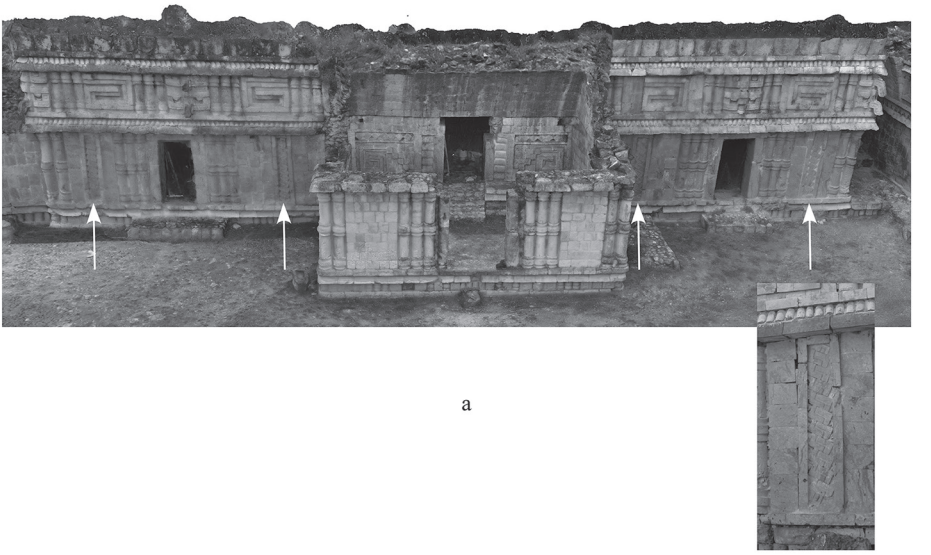
Gallareta's excavations at Labna indicate that the original triadic administrative center consisted of Rooms 22–25, with the central two (the tandem pair 23 and 24) being the throne room proper (Figure 14.3a). The attached buildings of the west patio composed the residential area. At a later point, the original center was supplanted by another triadic throne room composed of Rooms 18–21, a change also marked by redirection of the *sacbe* toward the new focal point. Key features of the original throne room are the mat panels bordering the doorways of the two flanking rooms (22 and 25). Although these might be taken for standard symbols of rulership, they only mark the flanking rooms, a pattern that can be observed at a variety of other sites. For instance, the facade and floor plan of the House of the Governor at Uxmal appears to reflect the offices of a paramount and four subordinates, each represented by facade sculptures surrounded by rectangular scrolls (Ringle 2012). Accompanying the scrolls are a series of small square decorative elements serving to convert them to stepped frets (Figure 14.3b). Those of the central building (the 10 central rooms) are decorated with nested rectangles. In contrast, these same elements on the facades of the two outer sections are decorated with mat signs. The separation of these two sections by portal vaults suggests that the outer sections were conceptually somewhat apart and may have been the administrative quarters of lesser nobles/officials. Possibly the mat signs indicate these were the offices of the Classic period analog of the Postclassic (*ah*) *holpop,* "head of the mat." Although the specific duties of this office are obscure, occupants served as the heads of a *popol nahs* and generally as the leading aides to a paramount, in some cases ruling over lesser communities (Roys 1943:63–64).

This same pattern can be found at sites beyond the Puuc. For instance, Rooms 42, 49, 35, and 43 of the Ek Balam acropolis, Ukit Kan Le'k's funerary complex, have a floor plan mirroring the Labna palace throne group (Figure 14.3c). If not actually a functioning throne room prior to his death, it minimally seems to have been built in imitation of one, as indicated by

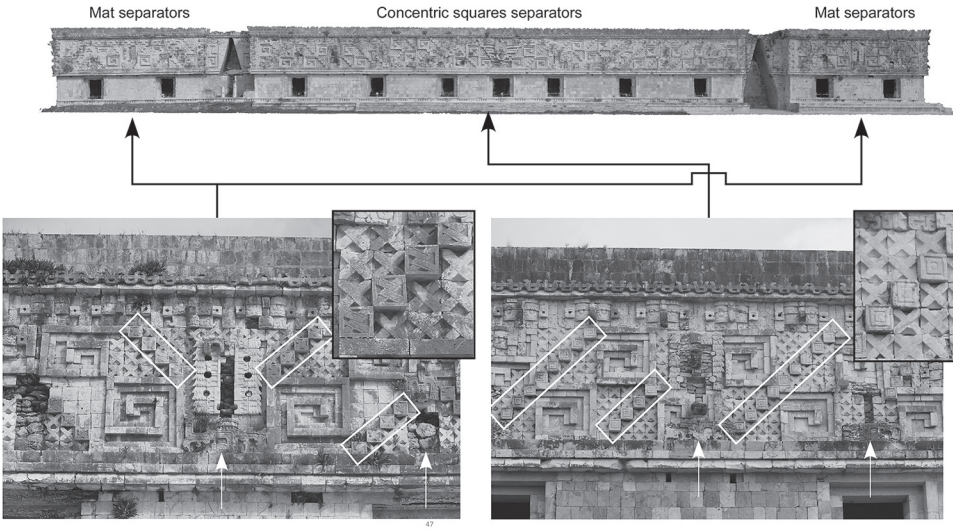
a seated figure perched on the nose of the doorway monster.[12] Interior benches/thrones are supported by sun god images very similar to the heads below the basal molding of the exterior Labna throne room. Rooms 42 and 43 constitute the flanking chambers of this triadic grouping. The latter, the House of the Fish, also bears a small mural of individuals congregating outside a building not unlike Room 43, seemingly in attendance to an official.[13] Like the wings of the House of the Governor, these structures are attached yet separate from the central building but more importantly bear mat signs below and framing the monster mask at the center of the roof. This pattern extends into the Chenes and Río Bec regions at sites such as Chicanna and Hochob (Figure 14.3d). In the former, the flanking doorways are again made to appear as separate buildings but with niches in the sculpted thatch roofs over the doors, as at Labna and Las Monjas. At Hochob, the wings have been abstracted as dummy houses with mat signs occupying the doorways (although there are rooms to each side). We thus suggest this triadic pattern represents a consistent arrangement of authority between a central royal house attended by officials symbolized by the two attached houses.

The Ek Balam structure was probably titled the Sak Xok Naah, which Lacadena García-Gallo (2003:47) glosses as "the White House of Reading" or "the White House of Respect/Obedience," noting a similar name in the texts from Kabah. He is apparently referring to Jamb 1 and a lintel from Str. 1A1, the Manos Rojos building, blocks of which are read by Nikolai Grube (2003:351) as *u xok naah* ("his reading house") or *xokow nah* ("reading house"). This glyphic parallel is highly interesting in that 1A1 also has a monster-maw "Chenes" doorway on its upper structure (Pollock 1980:Figs. 288–289) and is a probable palace. Given these considerations, Lacadena García-Gallo's translation of these buildings as houses of "respect" or "obedience" seems more likely. Alternatively, *xok* could refer to the zoomorph forming the entrance to the throne room.

Manos Rojas is a common variant of the triadic motif, in which the central tandem rooms are raised to a second story and accessed by means of a "flying" stairway, dividing the rooms below into two wings. Another example is the Grupo Magaña of Huntichmul. A multistoried acropolis, the uppermost tier consisted of a pair of tandem rooms flanked on either side by paired rooms. The summit was accessed by a "flying" stairway and again bears a "Chenes" mask around the central entrance (Pollock 1970). Although it is the largest of the Bolochen sites in our settlement survey sample, it does not have an expansive palace as do its neighbors Kiuic, Labna, and Sabana Piletas. Instead, the Chenes doorway marks the summit of the Grupo Magaña

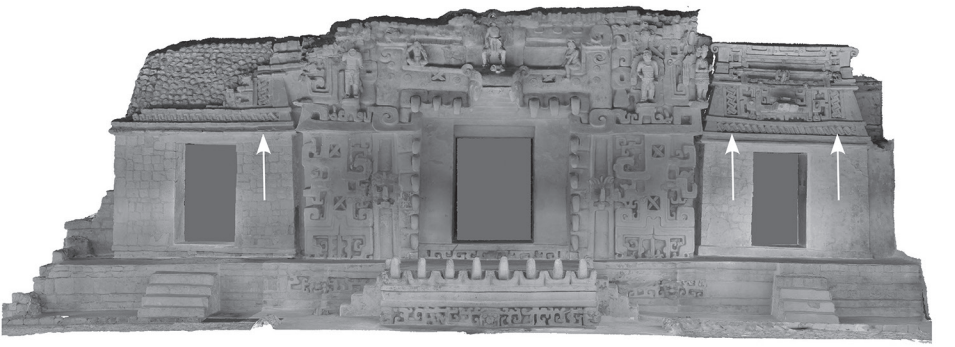


a



b

Figure 14.3. Examples of public buildings with tripartite facades in northern Yucatan. (*a*) The first throne room complex of Labna's main palace. Mat motifs marked by white arrows (Photoscan 3D image by William Ringle); (*b*) Details of the upper wall zone of the House of the Governor, Uxmal, showing alternation of nested rectangles over the central block of rooms with mat motifs in the lateral wings. White arrows mark positions of seated figures (Photoscan 3D image by William Ringle); (*c*) Photogrammetric reconstruction of the facade of Rooms 43-35-42, Str. GT-1 (the Acropolis) of Ek Balam (Photoscan 3D image by William Ringle); (*d*) The facade of Hochob Str. 2. Mat motifs marked by white arrows (Photograph by William Ringle).



c

d

as Huntichmul's final throne rooms, a complex probably dating to the last generation of the site's florescence.

Conclusions

This chapter attempts to demonstrate that stranger-king narratives resulted from the tension between a traditional reliance on councilor forms of government and the expanded networks of central authority introduced during the Terminal Classic period. On the one hand, we see a rapidly growing "middle class" of prosperous citizens housed in vaulted buildings. On the other, palaces often grew dramatically during this time. While certainly a reflection of the growing power of the paramount, often these seem far too large to have been simply a royal household (e.g., Ek Balam, Labna, Sayil, and Kiuic). Another explanation is that they housed the entire court, employing a strategy of keeping allies and potential enemies close at hand, yet the domestic facilities (*chultuns,* kitchens, servant quarters) often seem too limited for a large permanent population. Instead, the most logical explanation is that they housed periodic but temporary gathering of the king's retinue, including visitors from outlying dependencies. These individuals would thus have had permanent housing elsewhere, in keeping with the generally high incidence of vaulted architecture, but would have been key actors in state matters. Thus, to the very close of the Classic period, public manifestations of rulership continued to incorporate references to and accommodations for client elites (see Arnauld 2001 for a somewhat different interpretation of the dynamics of the period).

Stranger-king narratives may reference the augmentation of centralized authority by sanctions from afar, such as the title of *kalo'mte',* without necessarily involving foreigners. Alternatively, foreigners may have been invited to marry into local dynasties, as happened numerous times elsewhere, infusing leadership with the prestige of titles and blood from beyond. But it appears likely that even these were part of the strategies of ambitious local elites who looked for means to subvert a conservative order. In this sense, Yucatan stranger-king narratives may have reflected structures without events more often than not.

A question related to the appearance of new titles and emblem glyphs is whether these also marked the advent of divine kings and, if so, whether the institution went north to die. This necessarily involves a broader critique of the translation of the epithet *k'uhul ajaw* as "divine lord," whether "sacred"

or "holy" might be preferable, or whether it was merely an honorific akin to English "your reverence" or "your worship." Although space precludes a full discussion, it should be noted that in the south, the title, when held by a male, is nearly always, if not always, bound to an emblem glyph.[14] Unlike female and deity names, where *k'uhul* appears as a prefix, this is never the case for males because of the link to emblem glyphs. In other word, southern kings were never simply a *k'uhul ajaw* but a *k'uhul ajaw* of whatever entity emblem glyphs stand for. Females, in contrast, possessed this quality largely in their capacity as wives or mothers.[15]

The *k'uhul* epithet in the north is indeed rare but is most in evidence at those sites with emblem glyphs and the *kalo'mte'* title, such as Ek Balam and Dzibilchaltun. Thus, alternative forms of territorial or political organization elsewhere are likely responsible for the absence of the *k'uhul ajaw* title. (This may explain the absence of the epithet at Oxkintok, which, although the *kalo'mte'* title is present, lacks a standard emblem glyph.) The relative indifference of northern texts to dynastic history and pedigree may also reflect that succession to office may have been based only partially on descent, undercutting a frequent ideological underpinning of divine rulership.

Chichen Itza and Uxmal are exceptions to all this, exceptions that seem to further undermine the assumption of kingly divinity. Although Uxmal's monuments are in a poor state of preservation, clear instances of the *k'uhul* affix can be found on Altar 10 at B2, A4, and B5. These mark three individuals linked by *yitah* and having the title *k'uhul ajaw* follow their names. (Although some have suggested that one or more of these is an emblem glyph, clarification of the full symbolic form of *ajaw* renders this unlikely.) The co-presence of three individuals marked as "divine" lords seems improbable since usually only one person was so marked at a site, suggesting that *k'uhul* here represented a less exalted title or epithet. At "Old" Chichen Itza, T32/36 is actually quite common, but it does not seem linked to a single paramount and in some cases is attached to people who clearly weren't paramounts. For instance, the title "*k'ul ah k'ak'*" appears in a few contexts, such as the hieroglyphic band of the Caracol and on Lintel 4 of Las Monjas, suggesting it marked a fire priest rather than a paramount. *Kokom* is also prefixed with *k'ul/k'uhul* in texts from the Akab Dzib (E2) and Casa Colorada (58). *Kokom* can be interpreted either as a lineage name or an office akin to "judge" (Voss and Kremer 2000), but in either case "divine" would not seem a likely prefix. Finally, objects are sometimes marked with the quality, as for instance *u k'ul otot* at C2 of the Akab Dzib lintel. Thus, it would seem that, at least in the

north, *k'uhul* probably does not mark personal divinity. If indeed it does exist in the southern lowlands, it is only within the restricted context of the emblem glyph title.

In closing, although we have not directly addressed the fact that some stranger-king narratives claim Mexican origins, we believe the motives and tensions were similar, as elaborated upon in our recent publications. In our view, subscription to "Mexican" or "Toltec" definitions of kingship resulted in similar powers to sanction rulers and nobles in office but cast within the ideology associated with the feathered serpent. A possible stratigraphic demonstration of this shift in allegiances may come from the House of the Governors, part of the construction program that represented the ascendance of "Toltec" rulership at that site. Construction of the basal platform of that building covered an earlier structure on its western flank (Pollock 1970:66–80), a triadic structure with a central Chenes-style entrance reflective of earlier forms of authority.

Thus, kingship in northern Yucatan appears not to have conformed to a single archetype but rather was the outgrowth of several regional traditions modified by varying appeals to foreign legitimation beginning in the latter eighth century CE. While *kalo'mte'* forms of rulership seem to have struck an uneasy accommodation with their vassals, "Toltec" forms seem to have embraced this internal diversity, at least in their public representations. Ultimately, however, the centripetal forces of a more empowered secondary elite may have pulled Chichen Itza and Uxmal apart. Nevertheless, these late polities laid the foundations for the last stage of Maya court life at Mayapan, where the role of councils was if anything more prominent, as indicated by the proliferation of colonnaded halls (Arnauld 2001; Masson and Peraza Lope 2014; Proskouriakoff 1962; Ringle and Bey 2001). Probably reflecting the more complex internal segmentation of Mayapan's political organization, they confirm that the councils were once again able to survive radical changes of fortune to become integral institutions of the last great northern Maya city.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1. Northern inscriptions are bereft of the lengthy dynastic sequences common at centers of the Southern Lowlands. Modest exceptions are Edzna (see Pallán Gayol 2009), Coba (Gronemeyer 2004), and Ek Balam (Lacadena García-Gallo 2003); Itzimte is perhaps another (Graña-Behrens 2016). The mother of some figures at Chichen Itza is mentioned, but no succession of leaders. Elsewhere in the north, we have only snapshots of the reigns of individual rulers.

2. The combination of Yucatec place names, ethnohistorical sources, and glyph glosses presents considerable orthographic challenges. I have not modified colonial forms for names, places, or quotes from ethnohistorical sources, but I have followed modern conventions for glyph readings.

3. The animal head resembles the emblem of Acanceh, Yucatan, except that the latter also has "death" markings on its cheek.

4. Stephen Houston (2014) suggests that Ukit Kan Le'k summons a representative (*ba tzam*) of Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek. However, the verb *pek,* at M1, terminates in *-ja,* possibly a passivizing suffix. The prefix is unfortunately illegible, but the possibility exists that it is Ukit Kan Le'k who is being summoned.

5. His mother is a royal woman and his father is Ukit Ahkan, who does not seem to have been a royal (Lacadena García-Gallo et al 2015). The relevant texts are a bone from his tomb and the Mural of Room 22. As the authors state, "This is almost an exceptional information in the hieroglyphic texts from northern Yucatan."

6. The Xcochkax group, consisting of the structures 4E-2, 6, and 1 and 3E-10-13, may possibly be an EPCC (Michelet et al. 2000:Fig. 2.1), although these include no long structure.

7. Arnauld (2001) and Kowalski and colleagues (2002:92) were perhaps the first to identify Str. 44 as a *popol nah.*

8. It certainly postdates 650 CE since that is the average of two radiocarbon dates on lintels from Str. Sub-44 (Maldonado Cárdenas 2003:42)

9. At Ek Balam we identified two courts, one in the Main Plaza (GT-8-9) and another to the northwest in the Grupo Sacrificios. The latter seems to date to a later period when Ek Balam was in decline.

10. The date of Stela 9 consists of a *lahuntun* sign followed by 5 Ajaw. Originally the 5 Ajaw was taken to mark the day of the tenth *tun,* hence 9.14.10.0.0, but more recent opinion favors identifying 5 Ajaw as day ending the *katun* in which the *lahuntun* falls, hence the reading of 10.0.10.0.0, falling in *katun* 5 Ajaw, 10.1.0.0.0 (Graña-Behrens 2002; Maldonado Cárdenas et al. 2002:93).

11. The Dzibilchaltun and Ek Balam *kalo'mte*'s may have obtained their titles from sites somewhat further south since *kalo'mte*'s appear at Coba, Edzna, and Oxkintok 70 years or more before their appearance at Dzibilchaltun and Ek Balam. The title occurs several times at Oxkintok, including the Palacio Chiich and on the ballcourt ring. The date of the latter is unfortunately fragmentary: Daniel Graña-Behrens (2002:452) suggests a date close to 9.14.2.0.0 (ca. 713 CE), which seems reasonable and is close to a 9.13.0.0.0 (692 CE) date on the 2B11 hieroglyphic stairway, one block of which also bears a *kalo'mte'* glyph (Pollock

1980:290). Other examples of the title are undated. Oxkintok is the only Puuc center with a clear mention of the title and, although early, it is here clearly associated with the ballgame.

12. Lacadena García-Gallo and colleagues (2015) state: "Es difícil saber si la elección del edificio fue causal o su construcción se planeó desde un principio para albergar los restos del gobernante, tan apropiado es el tema de la iconografía que le acompaña."

13. Lacadena García-Gallo and colleagues (2015) note one individual is labeled "AJ-cho-o, ajcho' 'el de Cho'," and suggest he is possibly not a local resident. This would fit well with the idea that this room was part of the royal bureaucracy.

14. David Stuart (2005a:265) argues this was to anchor the title in the polity and landscape.

15. While it may be objected that these women were considered divine by virtue of their marriage to a divine king or through giving birth to a son who would later attain that status, Lacanha Panel 1 suggests otherwise. Following a typical "child of mother" / *k'uhul ixik* sequence at K1-K3, Ixik Chak Hix is named as a female *sajal.* Given her station as the wife and mother of *sajals,* a translation of *k'uhul* as divine seems unwarranted. A similar example can be found in a parentage clause on on El Cayo Altar 4, where the name of the mother of the principal figure, again a *sajal,* is preceded by the title *k'uhul ixik.*

15

Rulers at Chichen Itza at the End of the Classic Period

Their Continuity as Seen in Iconography and Architecture

RAFAEL COBOS

One of the meanings of the word "transformation" that interests us in this chapter is "a dramatic change in form, nature or appearance."[1] When transformations are detected in the archaeological context, we must consider how they are displayed and which direction the changes are taking with respect to form, nature, or appearance. Transformations, for instance, occurred when civilizations came to their end, or urban life became nonexistent, or massive depopulation affected large settlements and regions, or economic and political systems associated with complex societies collapsed. On the other hand, transformations could occur due to the rise of a civilization and urban life, an exponential growth of the population, the ascent and consolidation of economic systems, and the continuance of political systems in complex societies. There are abundant examples of both types of transformations reported in the archaeological records of societies that settled in the Old and New Worlds.

In the New World, the portion of the Maya area located in southeastern Mexico had to face changes, and the respective material evidence reveals a wide variety of transformations. The changes and transformations I refer to in this chapter occurred during the ninth century and ended by the eleventh century. The interpretation of archaeological data uncovered in several Maya settlements located in the northern and southern lowlands clearly suggest the following: the political, economic, and social systems came to their end; large and complex architectural compounds as well as agricultural terraces and causeways ceased to be constructed; the population decreased drastically; inter- and intraregional exchange vanished; elite members and their

subordinates disappeared; and the carving of stelae to register Maya rulers as well as calendric records faded away (see Demarest, O'Mansky et al. 2004).

The transformations that the various pre-Hispanic Maya communities and regions underwent were also contemporaneous with the changes occurring during the Epiclassic period in other parts of Mexico, such as the Mexican Highlands (Diehl and Berlo 1989; Kowalski and Kristan-Graham 2007; Sugiura 2001), the coastal region of the Gulf of Mexico (southern Tamaulipas–Veracruz; Budar et al. 2017; Pascual Soto 2006), the Huastec region of Hidalgo and San Luis Potosí (Faust and Richter 2015; Zaragoza Ocaña 2009), and Oaxaca (Feinman and Nicholas 2016; Robles García 2004; Winter 2001). The transformations that affected or influenced all of these regions were also present in the Maya Lowlands, although their occurrence, degree of intensity, and temporality varied through time. Also, Maya settlements either incorporated or assimilated those changes and transformations in distinct ways (see Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume).

Chichen Itza in central Yucatan was one of the Maya sites that underwent changes and transformations, which started in the middle of the ninth century and lasted until the end of the eleventh century (Figure 15.1). Chichen Itza is an excellent example of how rulers and their political institutions faced dramatic changes in form, nature, and appearance within the political organization of their community (see Andrieu, Chapter 2, this volume). These transformations seem to be the result of changes that took place throughout the Maya Lowlands (Chase and Scarborough 2014; Demarest, O'Mansky et al. 2004) and other parts of Mesoamerica (Gillespie 1989; Kowalski and Kristan-Graham 2007; Ringle 2004, 2009; Ringle et al. 1998).

It is recognized that the political organization of Chichen Itza had a paramount ruler as its central element. Four features stood out about this important political authority. First, the supreme ruler was depicted in lintels, panels, mural paintings, and Stela 2. These four different areas in which the ruler was represented followed the traditional format, which was widely utilized throughout the Maya Lowlands during the Classic period. Second, only two paramount rulers had been identified in the epigraphic as well as the pictographic records at Chichen Itza. The names of these political authorities are K'ak' Upakal and K'uk'ulkan (Figure 15.2). Based upon the epigraphic record, we know that the former ruled Chichen Itza during the second half of the ninth century (Cobos 2007; García Moll and Cobos 2009; Grube and Krochock 2007; Krochock and Freidel 1994; Navarro 2012; Velásquez García 2016). Sixteenth-century written documents such as the *Relaciones histórico-geográficas de la gobernación de Yucatán* (De la Garza et al. 1983) and the

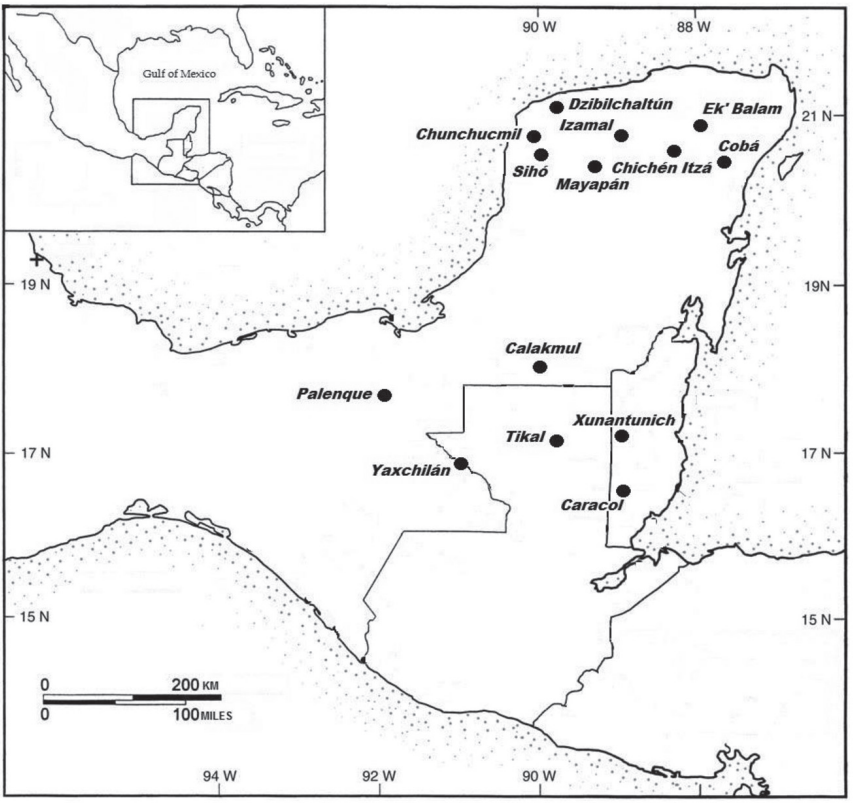
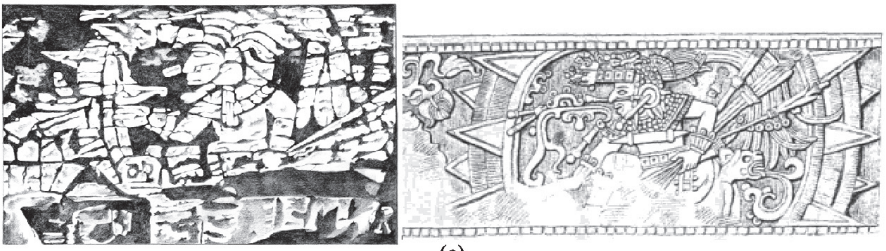


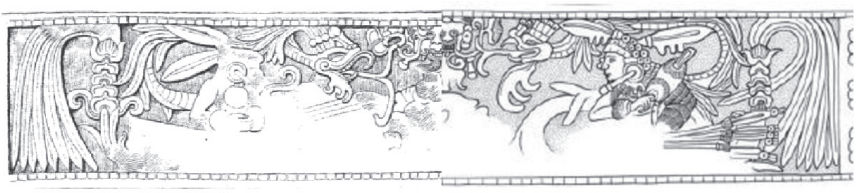
Figure 15.1. Location of Chichen Itza and other northern Maya Lowland sites (drawing by R. Cobos).

Relación de las cosas de Yucatán (Landa 1959), Classic period mural paintings (Miller 1977), and sculptural elements (Navarro 2007; Tozzer 1957) allude to the latter ruler, who governed Chichen Itza after K'ak' Upakal disappeared from the political scene toward the end of the ninth century. Third, biographic events are recorded neither in K'ak' Upakal's hieroglyphic texts nor in K'uk'ulkan's iconographic elements. The former ruler is depicted in fire ceremonies, whereas the latter is represented in an enthronization ceremony as well as in warfare activities (Grube and Krochock 2007; Krochock and Freidel 1994; Velásquez García 2016). Fourth, in Chichen Itza's hieroglyphic inscriptions, the prefix *ajaw* is associated with the ruler, which is a feature Chichen shares with other typical Classic period Maya sites.

The inscribed monuments of the Monjas compound, the Red House, and Stela 2, found a few meters to the west of the latter building, refer to K'ak' Upakal. Apparently, he ruled Chichen Itza during the second half of the ninth



(a)



(b)

(c)

Figure 15.2. (*a*) *left*, Captain Sun Disk, El Castillo north lintel—south side (Rubbings by Merle Greene Robertson © Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute, 1995–2007, used with permission); *right*, upper Temple of the Jaguars lintel (from Maudslay 1889–1902:III:Plate 35b); (*b*) K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent (Seler 1998:122); (*c*) *left*, K'uk'ulkan associated with a featherless serpent with thick hooks (from Wren and Schmidt 1991:Figure 9.8, drawing by Linnea Wren); *right*, K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines (from Ruppert 1943:Figure 23).

century and, as a central authority, he participated in ceremonies or rituals that were associated with fire. In addition, if we consider that the Monjas compound located in "Old Chichen" was used as K'ak' Upakal's residential and administrative palace, it would explain that several hieroglyphic texts in the compound's lintels had been dedicated to K'ak' Upakal's parents as well as to certain deities. For example, Lintel 3 was dedicated to lady K'ay am, K'ak' Upakal's mother; Lintel 4 was dedicated to Cho-ko- wa-ju? -a-b'i, who was the ruler's father; the deities Yax Pech Kan and Yax U K'ukum K'awil are referred to in Lintels 2 and 6, respectively. In short, the hieroglyphic texts from the Monjas compound refer to K'ak' Upakal as a ruler, as a son, and as a brother. The depictions also include the deities that accompany him (Grube and Krochock 2007; Velásquez García 2016).

K'uk'ulkan's political activities are associated with "New Chichen," located north of the Monjas compound. New Chichen was the community center during the tenth and eleventh centuries, and there exist copious representations of K'uk'ulkan in the main edifices such as El Castillo (2D5), El Mercado (3D11), the Temple of the Warriors (2D8), the Temple of the Jaguars, and the Great Ball Court (2D1).

K'uk'ulkan is depicted as a political as well as a military authority, and various different representations of him have been found. Scholars agree that the depicted individuals associated with feathered serpents constitute K'uk'ulkan. I suggest that Chichen's iconography that shows individuals associated with featherless serpents can also be interpreted as K'uk'ulkan, which leads to three questions regarding the two differences already mentioned in this paragraph. First, why are there differences in the representations of serpents when they are associated with different individuals? Second, what is the reason for the iconographic diversity being coupled with the images of different individuals who appear to be related to K'uk'ulkan? Third, why are different individuals accompanied by dissimilar serpents presented in the main buildings of the Great Terrace, which date to the apogee of Chichen Itza?

The transformations that occurred in the political organization of Chichen Itza after the ninth century constitute an excellent example of William Ringle's (2004) identification of the Quetzalcoatl cult at the site. According to Ringle (2004:167), the cult consisted of "a set of imagery, beliefs, and practices associated with an ideology of leadership." Therefore, the different actors depicted as political and military authorities in Chichen's iconography can be considered as paramount rulers who governed the site and followed the cult. These supreme political authorities used the term "K'uk'ulkan" to

acknowledge themselves and to be identified by members of the community as paramount rulers. Furthermore, they distinguished themselves from each other by using peculiar features that were easily recognizable in the iconographic program displayed on the Great Terrace's important structures.

When I recognized that Chichen's sovereigns used the name K'uk'ulkan to refer to themselves as paramount rulers, I accepted that these were real persons who inhabited the site.

Diego de Landa (1959:12–13) in the sixteenth century and Adela Breton (1917) a century ago noticed this fact, which is why K'uk'ulkan cannot be identified as or associated with a mythical figure.

During the tenth century, Chichen's rulers were fully identified with the Quetzalcoatl cult, which also appeared in Cholula, Tula, El Tajin, Xochicalco (Ringle 2004, 2009; Ringle et al. 1998). In addition, these new K'uk'ulkan leaders did not use the term "*ajaw*" to be identified as sovereigns. This reveals a significant change regarding the way in which Maya royalty refers to the paramount ruler during the Classic period. The different representations of feathered and featherless serpents in Chichen Itza clearly indicated to the inhabitants of this site that the new rulers were using a new term to refer to their highest political leaders. Therefore, in this chapter, I show how Chichen Itza's rulers consciously adopted ideological elements regarding beliefs, practices, and imagery to continue justifying their positions as paramount rulers. This took place at a time when ruptures and transformations were still occurring in the northern Maya Lowlands in the tenth and eleventh centuries (see Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume; see also Andrieu, Chapter 2, this volume).

Another aspect worth mentioning regarding Chichen's royalty in the tenth and eleventh centuries is that K'uk'ulkan rulers were associated neither with fire ceremonies nor with dedicatory rites to honor buildings, as had occurred a century earlier. Instead of following the strict protocol of the Classic period Maya royalty, K'uk'ulkan sovereigns exercised their freedom to depict in the site's iconography, which each one of them considered to be important or relevant events during their kingship. This suggests that each one of the K'uk'ulkan rulers developed their own political discourse, which subsequently allowed them to portray, for example, an enthronization ceremony in the North Temple of the Great Ball Court, captured individuals at El Mercado, and daily life of coastal maritime communities controlled by Chichen Itza. The latter is rendered in one of the murals of the Temple of the Warriors.

The iconographic representations of three K'uk'ulkan rulers in several

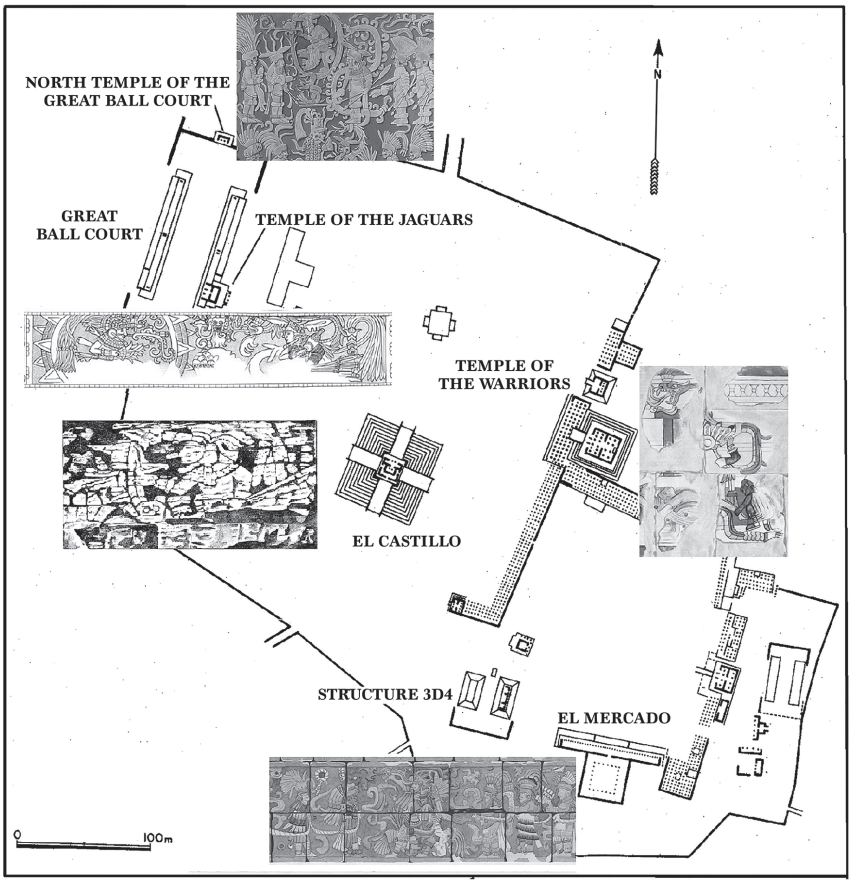


Figure 15.3. Representations of Captain Sun Disk and three K'uk'ulkan warrior-rulers in different buildings of the Great Terrace (El Castillo: north lintel, south side [Rubbings by Merle Greene Robertson © Pre-Columbian Art Research Institute, 1995–2007, used with permission]; North Temple of the Great Ball Court [drawing by Miguel Ángel Fernández]; Upper Temple of the Jaguars lintel [from Seler 1998:122]; El Mercado [from Ruppert 1943:Figure 23]; Temple of the Warriors [reproduction by Morris 1931:Plate 145]).

buildings on the Great Terrace reveal that they are pictured as warriors, which agrees with the beliefs and new ideas correlated with the cult of Quetzalcoatl that might have arrived at Chichen Itza sometime during the tenth century. There also exists iconographic evidence of what appears to be a fourth ruler portrayed as a warrior encircled in a solar disk.

This fourth ruler does not display any features associated with feathered or featherless serpents and was named Captain Sun Disk (Miller 1977).

Captain Sun Disk and the three K'uk'ulkans exhibit a distinctive spatial distribution associating them with structures such as El Castillo, the Temple

Table 15.1. Chichen Itza's paramount rulers and their proposed historical sequence between the ninth and eleventh centuries

Rulers' names	Suggested historical sequence of their rulerships	Location of their artistic depictions	Major construction project(s)
K'uk'ulkan (feathered serpent with large spines)	Eleventh century	El Mercado, Structure 3D4, Temple of the Warriors (upper building)	El Mercado, Structure 3D4, Temple of the Warriors (upper building)
K'uk'ulkan (featherless serpent with thick hooks)	Tenth century (second half?)	North Temple of the Great Ball Court	The Great Ball Court compound
K'uk'ulkan (feathered serpent)	Tenth century	Temple of the Jaguars upper building	El Castillo and Temple of the Jaguars' upper building
Captain Sun Disk	Tenth century (first half?)	Temple of the Jaguars upper and lower buildings; El Castillo	Temple of the Jaguars lower building?
K'ak' Upakal	Second half of the ninth century	Lintels of the Monjas Compound and the Red House, Stela 2	The Monjas Compound (in Old Chichen)

of the Jaguars, the Great Ball Court, El Mercado, and the Temple of the Warriors (Figure 15.3; Table 15.1). When considering the constructive sequence of the Great Terrace and buildings located in its central and western sections, I notice that these edifices constitute the largest structures laying upon these two sections. When I look at the Great Terrace's chronological construction sequence, it appears that El Castillo and the Temple of the Jaguars date earlier than the other three buildings. Moreover, the Temple of the Warriors seems to have been the last major architectural edifice built in Chichen Itza at the end of the Classic period.

By way of example, the warrior encircled in a solar disk is portrayed in early buildings, El Castillo as well as in the Temple of the Jaguars. K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent is only depicted in later buildings, the Temple of the Jaguars and the North Temple of the Great Ball Court. A second K'uk'ulkan is associated with a featherless serpent with thick hooks. Another K'uk'ulkan coupled with a feathered serpent with spines is found in still later buildings, the Temple of the Warriors, at El Mercado, and its

associated building, the ballcourt or Structure 3D4 that is associated with the latter building. In the next pages I elaborate on each one of these warriors who in all likelihood were Chichen's paramount rulers.

Captain Sun Disk

The first individual recognized as Captain Sun Disk is always portrayed inside a sun shield, seated on a jaguar throne, dressed as a warrior, and holding his weaponries (Miller 1977; Schele and Mathews 1998:230–232, Figure 6.29; Seler 1998; Taube 1994:226–227, Figure 17 a–d and 18–b). Another set of features associated with this captain include large ear flares with long earplugs, a lengthy tubular bead going through his nasal septum, and a prominent headdress with Chac mask (Miller 1977:200; see also Taube 1994:227, Figure 17-a, where the remains of a possible solar disk figure are visible). Captain Sun Disk had been identified by Charles Lincoln (1990:174–174a, Figure 1, 278–278a, Figure 7) as K'ak' Upakal. However, the image that Lincoln uses comes from a carved stone of unknown provenience, and the depicted warrior is standing and not associated with a jaguar throne.

Captain Sun Disk is clearly visible on the murals and wooden lintel found on top of the Temple of the Jaguars, in one of the carved stones that adorn the western wall in the Temple of the Jaguars' lower building, and on a wooden lintel located in the north room of the upper part of El Castillo. Captain Sun Disk could have been the ruler who governed Chichen Itza after the death or disappearance of K'ak' Upakal toward the end of the ninth century. For the time being, I do not know whether Captain Sun Disk was related to K'ak' Upakal as one of his blood relatives, whether he was the latter's successor at Chichen Itza's government at the end of the ninth and early tenth centuries, or if he became a ruler for some time during the first half of the tenth century and several years after K'ak' Upakal's death.

It seems that Captain Sun Disk is indistinctly depicted either as a living human being or as a dead person. For instance, his representation as an active sovereign is evident on the wooden lintel of the northern part of El Castillo and in the western wall of the lower Temple of the Jaguars. In both instances, Captain Sun Disk is positioned in front of several individuals who walk toward him to present him with what appears to be an offering (wooden lintel of El Castillo) or to engage in a dialog with individuals who appear to be his warriors (western wall of the lower Temple of the Jaguars).

The wooden lintel and murals of the upper Temple of the Jaguars is a second context in which Captain Sun Disk is visible. This time, however,

he gives the impression of being a deceased person. Captain Sun Disk faces an individual coupled with a feathered serpent with long feathers that Arthur Miller (1977:200–209) identified as Captain Serpent. In this chapter, this captain is identified as K'uk'ulkan. The latter interacts with Captain Sun Disk, who might have been a family ancestor or a past sovereign with whom K'uk'ulkan is identified due to either kinship ties or a direct political succession. The iconography of the upper Temple of the Jaguars represents two mortal actors instead of mythical individuals, as Ringle (2004:167) and Linda Schele and Peter Mathews (1998:230–232) suggest. These two mortal actors were not contemporaneous, and they are portrayed in a structure that was built after the construction of the lower Temple of the Jaguars and El Castillo. The archaeological evidence supports this argument.

Excavations conducted south of the South Temple of the Great Ball Court exposed stratigraphic as well as chronological evidence along the Great Terrace's northwestern sector (Canto Carrillo 2016). A first outstanding feature reveals that the wall and leveled surface upon which this walls rests are associated with the Great Terrace. At some point the northwestern sector of this terrace was dismantled to create a new area in which an additional architectural complex could be built. A second feature that is standing out in that area was the construction of a large leveled platform or terrace used as the foundation upon which the Great Ball Court, the North and South Temples, and the Temple of the Jaguars were placed in position for use.

The interpretation of the archaeological evidence uncovered in the northwestern sector of the Great Terrace suggests two different architectural construction episodes. In the first event, the Great Terrace extended to the west and ended right by the Temple of the Jaguars' lower building, which was contemporaneous with El Castillo. In the second construction episode, a large portion of the Great Terrace's northwestern sector was dismantled, which allowed for the construction of the Great Ball Court and associated buildings (Figure 15.4). It is worth mentioning that the new terrace or platform created to accommodate the Great Ball Court's architectural complex lacks the surrounding wall that is evident or noticeable in other parts of the Great Terrace (Canto Carrillo 2016).

The two construction episodes registered in the northwestern sector of the Great Terrace are used in the argument that Captain Sun Disk had been portrayed in two different time periods. In the first period, this individual was alive, as is clearly discernible in El Castillo's wooden lintel and on the western wall of the Temple of the Jaguars' lower building. In the second period, Captain Sun Disk is already deceased (Miller 1977:209), although he

seems to have had a role as an ancestral person related to either the political or family-related descendance of K'uk'ulkan, who is associated with a feathered serpent. Moreover, Captain Sun Disk might have promoted or was the main person in charge of having introduced the Quetzalcoatl cult to Chichen Itza. An extra piece of information regarding the relationship between Captain Sun Disk and K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent is the presence of serpent heads flanking the stairways whose steps lead directly to the summit of El Castillo and the Temple of the Jaguars' upper structure. These serpent heads are feathered and stylistically remarkably similar in their form.

K'uk'ulkan as a Feathered Serpent

The ruler known as K'uk'ulkan, who is depicted as a feathered serpent, might have orchestrated the construction of the Temple of the Jaguars' upper building and ordered the carving of the lintel as well as the paintings inside the back room of this elaborate structure. Regarding the murals, these paintings provide another piece of information about Captain Sun Disk as a deceased person who conceivably lived in and ruled Chichen Itza during the first half of the tenth century and before K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent.

According to Miller's (1977) interpretation, the murals show a military conflict between two individuals and the subsequent victory of K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent. Based upon the iconography displayed on the murals, Miller (1977) commented on his interpretations on the paintings. First, both sovereigns are honored. Second, both warrior-rulers are depicted in equal "*size, position, and magnificence in regalia*" (Miller 1977:219). Third, the paintings are part of an artistic display of public respect between two authorities who were most likely confronting each other. Fourth, the events painted on the murals are chronologically separated by at least one generation of artists which included painters, architects, and sculptors (among others) in charge of erecting such a magnificent structure.

In addition to Miller's interpretations, I add three more elements to the paintings' interpretation. First, K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent almost certainly orchestrated the construction of the Temple of the Jaguars' upper building to celebrate, commemorate, and claim his historical bonds with ruler Captain Sun Disk. Therefore, this K'uk'ulkan had Captain Sun Disk depicted in one of the most important structures built during his reign or government.

Second, K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent makes Captain

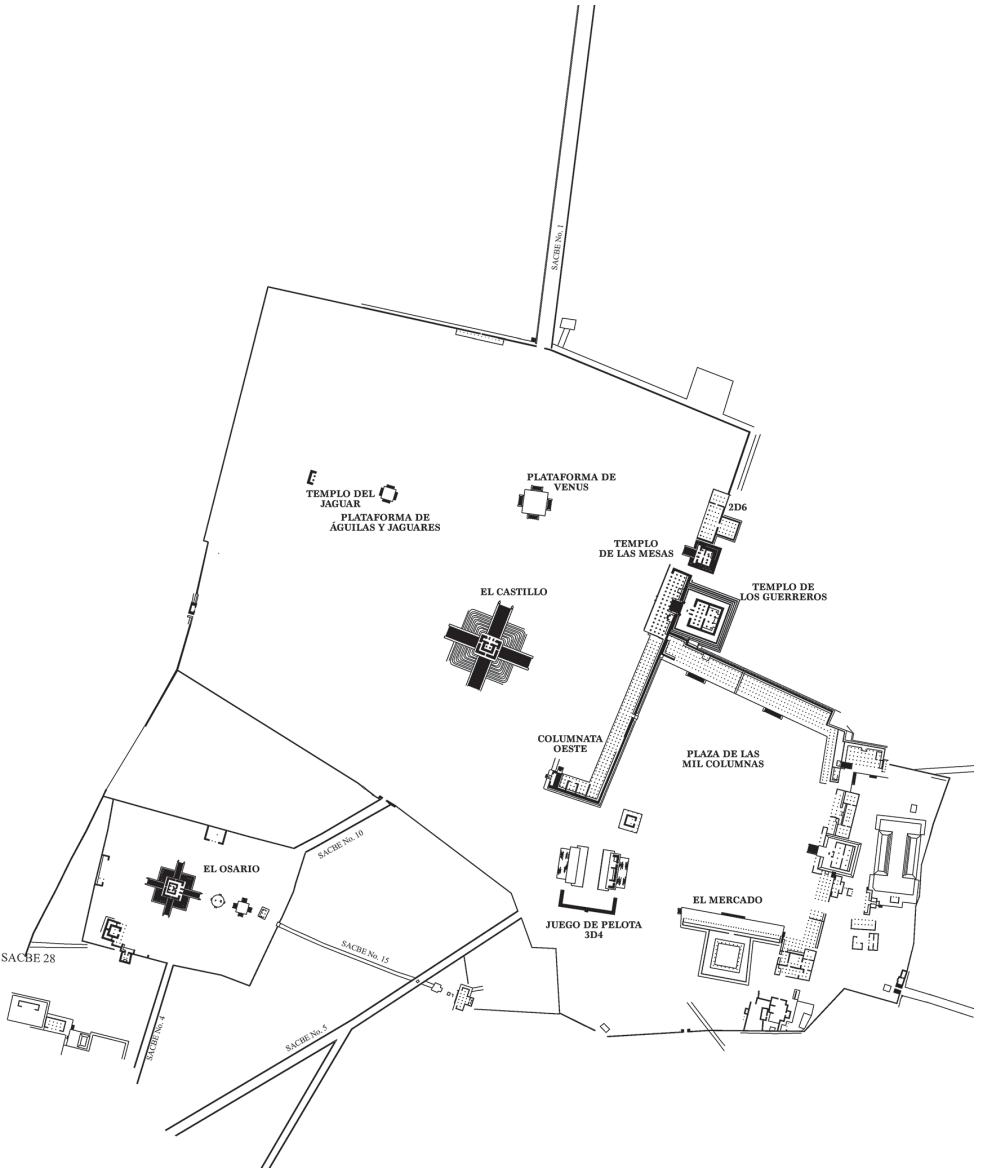
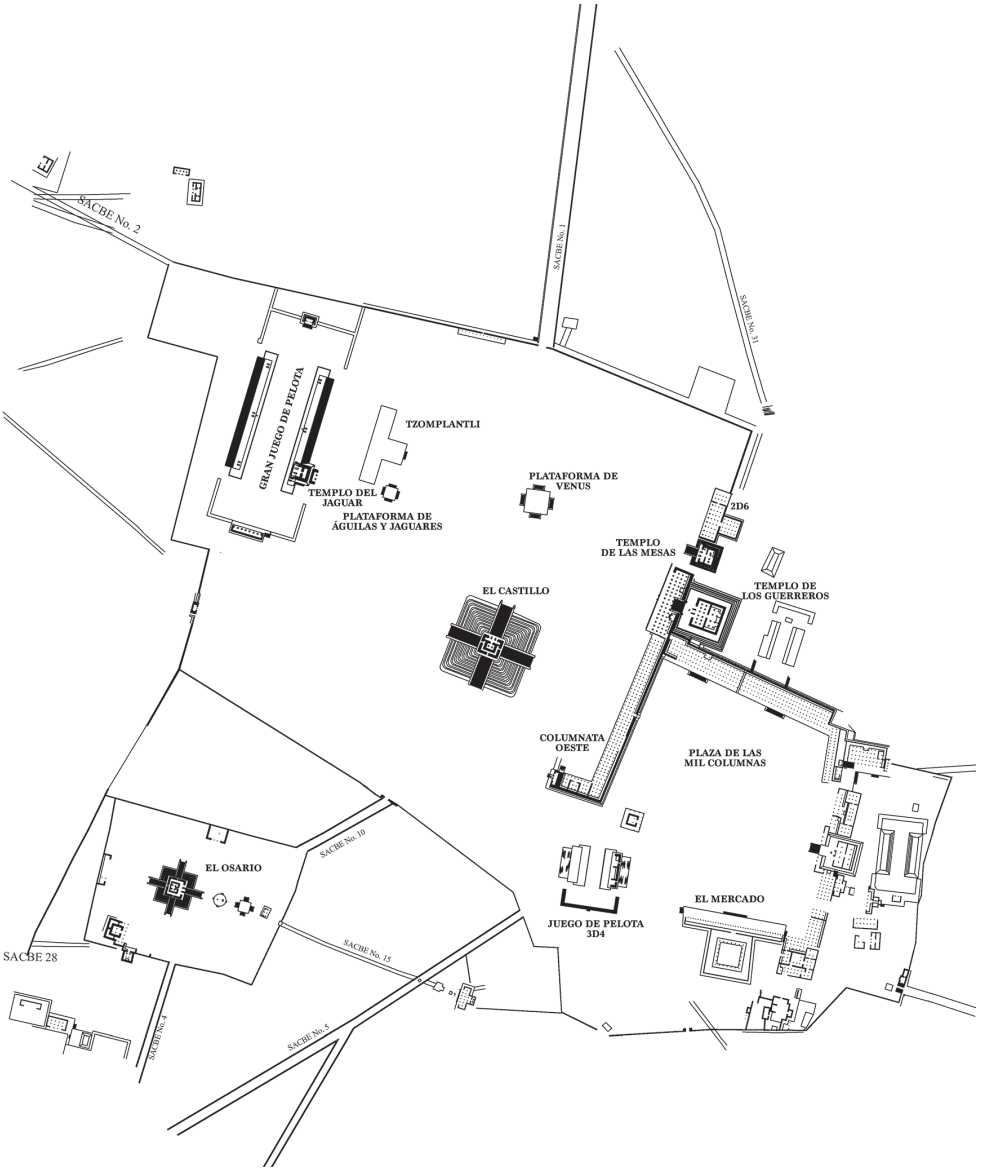


Figure 15.4. The Great Terrace before (*left*) and after (*right*) the construction of the Great Ball Court (from Canto Carrillo 2016:Figure 10.10, used with permission).


SACBE No. 2
SACBE No. 1
SACBE No. 31
GRAN JUEGO DE PELOTA
TZOMPLANTLI
TEMPLO DEL JAGUAR
PLATAFORMA DE ÁGUILAS Y JAGUARES
PLATAFORMA DE VENUS
2D6
TEMPLO DE LAS MESAS
TEMPLO DE LOS GUERREROS
EL CASTILLO
COLUMNATA OESTE
PLAZA DE LAS MIL COLUMNAS
EL OSARIO
SACBE No. 10
JUEGO DE PELOTA 3D4
EL MERCADO
SACBE 28
SACBE No. 15
SACBE No. 4
SACBE No. 5

Sun Disk to iconographically appear and participate in military confrontations in places located far beyond the Maya Lowlands. Were Captain Sun Disk already dead, he could not have been defeated in the battlefield. Is it possible that the mural depicts the military expansion and victories of K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent instead of a military confrontation with Captain Sun Disk? Or is it likely that Captain Sun Disk accompanied K'uk'ulkan and acted as a witness or spectator of his successful military activities, which included the expansion of, conquest of, and victories over regions and sites unknown to this date? I cannot elaborate any further on these three questions or enter into more detail in this chapter, but it would be worthwhile to reinterpret the theme of the mural paintings from a whole different angle than the one Miller (1977) proposed four decades ago.

Third, the Great Ball Court compound could have been an architectural, sculptural, and iconographic project conceived by K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent. However—and speculating a bit more—even though its construction started during this K'uk'ulkan's lifetime, he was not able to witness the end of this impressive and magnificent architectural complex. This K'uk'ulkan is portrayed in the iconography of the North Temple of the Great Ball Court and conveys the impression of being a deceased eyewitness in an enthronization ceremony, which is described below, and whose central or main figure is a K'uk'ulkan associated with a featherless serpent with thick hooks.

K'uk'ulkan as a Featherless Serpent with Thick Hooks

In the North Temple of the Great Ball Court, a little further to the north, two individuals are depicted who may well have been associated with the title K'uk'ulkan. The first K'uk'ulkan appears to be seated on a jaguar throne similar to the one at the entrance of the Temple of the Jaguars' lower building. The body of a large headless feathered serpent encompasses this central scene. Alfred Tozzer (1957) suggested that this was a solar figure, however, and contrary to Tozzer's opinion, it seems to be a K'uk'ulkan ruler—perhaps already deceased—who was associated with a feathered serpent.

A warrior standing on the right side near the ruler on the jaguar throne is visible. He is associated with a featherless snake, and thick hooks are protruding from its body. The ruler who is sitting on the jaguar throne observes the scene from a higher plane which reminds us of Ek' Balam Stela 1 as well as of Uxmal Stela 14, where two individuals are looking down from above to

witness events that are happening in front of them, which in this case is an enthronization ceremony (see Ringle 2004; Wren 1994).

If the enthronization ceremony depicted at the North Temple of the Great Ball Court refers to a sovereign who ruled at Chichen Itza, this paramount political authority could be another K'uk'ulkan ruler associated with a featherless serpent with thick hooks protruding from its body. During his lifespan, this K'uk'ulkan might have been responsible for two major events that occurred at Chichen Itza. First, he completed the construction of the North and South Temples as well as the two long rectangular buildings of the Great Ball Court compound. Second, he might have ordered the construction of the impressive intrasite and intersite causeway system beginning at the western corner of the Great Ball Court's terrace.

Chichen's Causeway 3 is 6 km long and links the Great Ball Court compound with a small site known as Cumtun. According to Rafael Cobos and Terance Winemiller (2001:288, Figure 5–6; see also Morris et al. 1931:216–218, Figure 132), Cumtun was a small community inhabited by craftsmen devoted to supply Chichen Itza with labor force, enormous blocks of limestone, and sculptural elements that were used in the architectural construction and decoration of facades, such as the carved serpent heads that are associated with the upper Temple of the Jaguars.

The legacy of K'uk'ulkan associated with a featherless serpent with thick hooks suggests that he was able to conclude important architectural programs within the site, expand Chichen's settlement, and enlarge the site's regional territory. In other words, this K'uk'ulkan continued to consolidate Chichen's supremacy in central Yucatan in a peaceful manner or with the help of his warriors.

K'uk'ulkan as a Feathered Serpent with Large Spines

The iconography of the Great Terrace's eastern sector shows another individual who seems to have been a third sovereign to whom the term K'uk'ulkan would apply. This individual is associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body, and he is shown in carved stone-panels and mural paintings in three specific activities. First, in the panels that adorn structures 3D4 (ballcourt associated with El Mercado) and 3D11 (El Mercado), this K'uk'ulkan is depicted as a warrior standing in front of his prisoners or captives. Second, in one of the murals that existed at the frontal room of the Temple of the Warriors upper building, K'uk'ulkan is painted as a serpent

associated with human sacrifice. Third, in a second mural that adorned the rear room of the same building, K'uk'ulkan is illustrated as a serpent either protecting or safeguarding a temple located at a coastal community.

In one of the panels that decorate Structure 3D4, K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body appears in two scenes where he is accompanied by several individuals. In the first scene K'uk'ulkan is positioned before several prisoners who are escorted by their guards who are holding the captives by their hair. Another individual standing face to face with K'uk'ulkan apparently leads the prisoners' procession and presents him with an offering consisting of plants or some type of flaming substance. A second group of individuals, who seem to be his military aides, approach K'uk'ulkan from the back.

A second representation of K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body is clearly visible in one of the panels that decorate a bench associated with El Mercado, or Structure 3D11 (see Figure 15.2. c-right). In this representation, K'uk'ulkan stands out as the more prominent figure and could be the same individual as shown in the Structure 3D4 panel. Here K'uk'ulkan is accompanied by several captive warriors whose hands are tied with ropes.

Two groups of captives are clearly noticeable in the northern, western, and eastern sides of El Mercado's bench. K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body constitutes the central figure in the northern side of the bench. Five warriors from the west walk toward him, and four prisoners from the east approach him as well. Two groups of four captives with their hands also tied with ropes are shown in the eastern and western sides of the bench. These eight captives followed the other nine prisoners whose ultimate goal consisted in meeting their captor who awaited them all.

Feathered serpents with large spines protruding from their bodies and headdresses similar to those reported from El Mercado bench are also represented in two murals in the Temple of the Warriors. A first mural that adorned one of the walls of the frontal room on top of the Temple of the Warriors shows an individual painted in black who is ready to perform a sacrifice. He is accompanied by a feathered serpent with large spines observing the sacrificial scene. Part of the serpent's body covers the surface of a platform and the back of the person who is scheduled to be sacrificed rests on the serpent's body.

According to Ann Axtell Morris (1931:I:400, Plate 145), one can see part of

the upper facade of a structure whose cornice displays small spools similar to the decoration of El Mercado.

The sacrificial scene illustrated in the frontal room of the Temple of the Warriors' upper building suggests that the sacrifice might have been the ultimate fate of the captured warrior. Therefore, K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body left a clear and ostentatious testimony in the iconography of El Mercado and Structure 3D4 that he was not only the one who captured prisoners but that he was personally in charge of sacrificing them as well. To perform this sacrifice, this K'uk'ulkan used what appears to be a long L-shaped object with which the captive's chest was to be stricken.

In a second mural that adorned one of the walls in the back room of the Temple of the Warriors' building, K'uk'ulkan is only depicted as a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body. The right side of the painting shows a structure that has the earmarks of a masonry temple with double access, which is located somewhere along the seacoast. The scene suggests that it is a temple associated with K'uk'ulkan and that a religious authority or a priest guards the temple's entrance. The sculpture or painting of a mythical being or deity is found inside the temple, and a feathered serpent with large spines, presumably representing a political authority or a sovereign, is his guard and protects what could be considered his temple or sanctuary. No person appears to have been associated with the serpent.

Based upon the material evidence, I suggest that the murals found in the Temple of the Warriors' upper building were painted on the order of K'uk'ulkan, who is depicted as a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body, while he was acting as another one of Chichen's paramount political authorities.

This feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body conceivably enjoyed a tremendous economic, political, and military bonanza at the local as well as the regional levels. For example, the Temple of the Warriors, El Mercado, and Structure 3D4 were presumably all built under his reign, dating back to sometime in the eleventh century when Chichen Itza was booming. The physical remains of K'uk'ulkan's political and military bonanza are evident in several of the maritime ports that Chichen Itza controlled during its apogee during that century.

The Temple of the Warriors, El Mercado, and Structure 3D4 may have been the last great edifices built upon the Great Terrace. Using stratigraphic as well as archaeological evidence, Morris (1931:165–172) and Ringle

(2009:16) concur in positing that the Temple of the Warriors was built upon the Temple of the Chac Mool. They recognize that this latter structure was erected shortly after El Castillo was built. This construction sequence seems to be correct when we also consider the stratigraphic and archaeological evidence yield by an intensive excavation program that revealed several substructures and stucco floors between El Castillo and the Northwest Colonnade (Cobos et al. 2016). In fact, the data unearthed by Cobos and colleagues (2016) complement the stratigraphic interpretations of Morris (1931).

The stratigraphic position of Structure 3D4 and El Mercado in relation to El Castillo, the Temple of the Chac Mool, and the Temple of the Warriors is still lacking, however. We know that El Mercado and its ball court 3D4 lay upon the Great Terrace, but we do not know if these two structures were built before, during, or after the construction of the Temple of the Warriors.

In this chapter I argue that K'uk'ulkan depicted as a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body probably ordered the construction of the Temple of the Warriors. If he did so, he paid special attention to numerous architectural, sculptural, and iconographic details, which also included the edifice's orientation. For instance, Cynthia Kristan-Graham (in Ringle 2009:16) and Ringle (2009:16) rightly point out that the midline of the Temple of the Warriors points in a straight line to the Temple of the Jaguars' upper building, and this latter upper building predates the construction of the Temple of the Warriors, which is a proposal I support.

I am intrigued by the fact that the Temple of the Warriors faces the outer back wall of the Temple of the Jaguars' upper building. Here I suggest that the orientation of the former building is aligned with the Temple of the Jaguars' lower edifice, and two interesting aspects stand out when having a look at Captain Sun Disk in Chichen Itza's history.

First, K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body might have ordered the alignment of the extravagant Temple of the Warriors with the lower construction at the Temple of the Jaguars consisting of a single small room. In doing so, this K'uk'ulkan recognized Captain Sun Disk as one of his political ancestors who introduced the Quetzalcoatl cult to Chichen Itza. Interestingly enough, Captain Sun Disk is neither represented nor depicted in the Temple of the Warriors or in El Mercado.

Second, it is also possible that K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body recognized or related to K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent is a possible common ancestor who ruled Chichen Itza earlier in time. It was upon the former K'uk'ulkan's

orders that the Temple of the Warriors be aligned with the Temple of the Jaguars. Bear in mind that this latter K'uk'ulkan initiated the economic, military, and political development of this settlement, which became the most important and influential political unit in southeastern Mesoamerica during the tenth century.

K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body identified himself as one more sovereign belonging to the select group of K'uk'ulkan rulers by having aligned the Temple of the Warriors with the Temple of the Jaguars. These political authorities abide and propagated the cult of Quetzalcoatl (Ringle 2004:167). K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines protruding from its body was aware of what it meant to perpetuate the cult and therefore embarked on military activities that included warfare and capturing prisoners, exchanging activities to procure luxurious objects manufactured in different regions located far away from the northern Maya Lowlands, and continuing its magnificent architectural, sculptural, and iconographic programs. All of these activities enhance K'uk'ulkan's figure as a paramount Chichen Itza ruler.

The political and military bonanza that K'uk'ulkan associated with a feathered serpent with large spines enjoyed was materialized in the several seaports that Chichen Itza controlled during the eleventh century. The mural painted in the back room of the building on top of the Temple of the Warriors is a clear reminder of that bonanza; in other words, the painting represents the seaports that functioned as transshipment ports under the exclusive use of Chichen Itza (Figure 15.5). These transshipment ports facilitated the movement of luxury objects along the seacoasts of the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea whose ultimate destination was Chichen Itza, located in central Yucatan and 90 km away from the nearest seacoast. The luxury goods transported by sea and along the coast were neither exchanged nor traded in other economic systems that could have existed inland and along the Maya coastal region. Chichen Itza did not worry about revitalizing the economy and settlements of other northern lowland sites. Instead, Chichen Itza favored and controlled the maritime coast for its own benefit. For this purpose, this ancient capital displayed an efficient military force whose duty was to guard and protect eleven transshipment ports that were under its military and political jurisdiction.

The mural painted on one of the back rooms located at the summit of the Temple of the Warriors showed warriors being transported in canoes and carrying their spear-throwers (atlatls) and shields. These warriors probably served different tasks. For instance, they defended the eleventh coastal

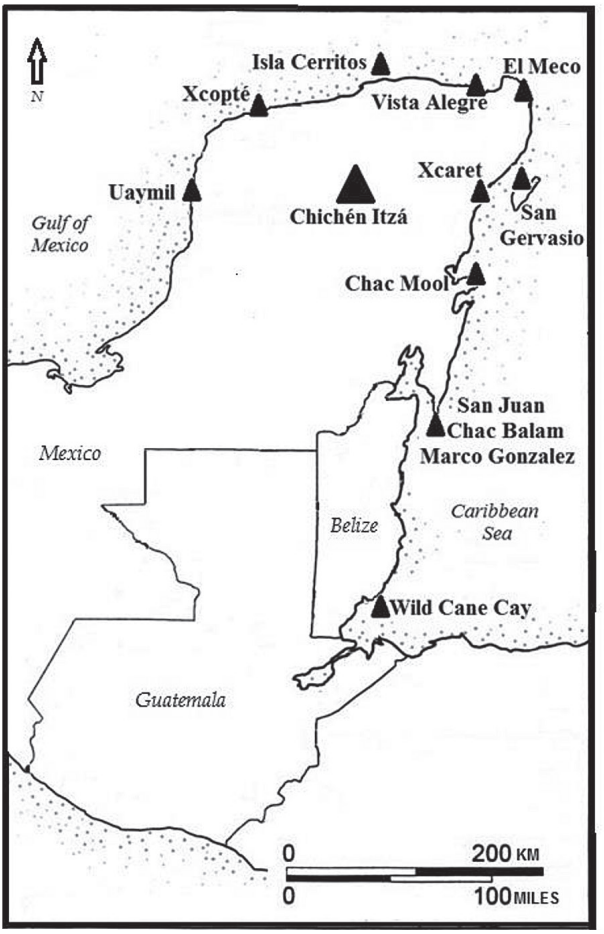


Figure 15.5. Chichen Itza and its maritime transshipment seaports in the eleventh century (drawing by R. Cobos).

communities under Chichen's domain; they guarded and protected the Coloradas salt beds that Chichen controlled in northern coastal Yucatan; and they protected and defended the canoes used to transport luxurious objects to Chichen to avoid any attacks by robbers and the theft of such luxury goods. It is worth mentioning that the study of coastal military architecture associated with Chichen's warriors has not yet been carried out, and the weaponry they used to attack and defend themselves has not been investigated. Coastal warriors' arsenal might have included spear-throwers, darts, obsidian and flint arrowheads, and wooden clubs with obsidian blades or *macuahuitl* (see Coggins and Ladd 1992 for several examples recovered from Chichen Itza's Cenote of Sacrifice).

Conclusions

In this chapter I acknowledge that in Chichen Itza the term "K'uk'ulkan" was used by its various sovereigns who ruled the site during the tenth and eleventh centuries. By using this term, the rulers made it clear that they abided by and followed the cult of Quetzalcoatl in the northern Maya Lowlands. Three aspects stand out regarding this subject: First, the Yucatec-Maya word "K'uk'ulkan" replaced the term "*ajaw,*" which was used to address or to distinguish Chichen Itza's paramount rulers.

Second, K'uk'ulkan sovereigns played an active role as warriors during the Terminal Classic period because they were expanding Chichen on a local and regional level. Third, K'uk'ulkan rulers recognized a likely common ancestor with whom they might have established an ascendant family relationship. Another possibility is that these paramount political authorities were linked to that common ancestor not by consanguineal ties but instead by a rhetoric in which they justified their privileged position via a direct political succession.

"K'uk'ulkan" was the term employed by the ruler who apparently lived at Chichen Itza in the tenth century. He intentionally used this term to establish himself as the paramount ruler and distinguish himself from the rest of the population. This K'uk'ulkan associated himself with a feathered serpent, the same way Quetzalcoatl was being portrayed in other parts of Mexico.

After this ruler's passing, subsequent sovereigns appropriated the term "K'uk'ulkan" and made it their own. The subsequent rulers portrayed themselves in different ways, however. In this contribution, I commented on three of these K'uk'ulkan sovereigns associated with three dissimilar serpents represented in the iconography of the site.

The iconographic evidence shows that the paramount K'uk'ulkan rulers played a crucial and active role as warriors. They are depicted in battlefields at the Temple of the Jaguars' upper building, in an enthronization ceremony (North Temple of the Great Ball Court), as captors and authorities in charge of sacrificing prisoners, and as political authorities exercising their jurisdiction over seacoast settlements, which depended exclusively on Chichen Itza. Furthermore, the archaeological data corroborate the iconographic evidence with respect to Chichen's control over eleven transshipment ports.

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, Chichen Itza reached its apogee and maximum territorial extension when it was in control of minor settlements located at the site's periphery. These settlements probably provided labor force, skilled craftsmen, and raw materials on a daily basis that were

requested from or required at Chichen. Chichen must have also sent skilled warriors not only to guard its eleven transshipment ports located along the coasts from northern Campeche to southern Belize but also to secure the land corridor that connected Chichen Itza with Isla Cerritos, the main seaport located 90 km north of the landlocked capital. Therefore, the diverse warfare events in which the various K'uk'ulkan sovereigns got involved in included several challenges in different coastal as well as inland areas, which allowed them to consolidate Chichen's military and political position.

The iconographic representations in the main buildings located upon the Great Terrace suggest important aspects in connection with the royal continuity at Chichen Itza. The representations of Captain Sun Disk and the different K'uk'ulkan sovereigns suggest that there existed a minimum of four rulers at the site between 900 and 1100 CE, which had all been depicted as warriors. Moreover, Captain Sun Disk was most likely the key ruler when it comes to the introduction and dissemination of the Quetzalcoatl cult at Chichen Itza. It appears that this captain formed the link between the past, when a new cult emerged, and more modern times, when K'uk'ulkan sovereigns had completely immersed themselves in that cult. Should this have been the case, two of the K'uk'ulkan paramount political authorities identified Captain Sun Disk as a real actor who was very influential in Chichen's military, political, and social development of events.

The transformations that affected the sovereigns and their institutions at Chichen Itza during the end of the Terminal Classic period give the impression of having been influenced by changes that occurred in other parts of Mesoamerica after the rise of the Quetzalcoatl cult. Chichen's royalty did participate in these changes. However, the manner by which the rulers adopted, assimilated, disseminated, and perpetuated those changes reveals that the form and appearance was purposefully manipulated to construct and consolidate Chichen Itza's prominence.

Note

1. *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed. (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 1989), s.v. "transformation."

https://caracol.org/drs-chase/publications/
https://caracol.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/DCAC2021-Rupture-and-Postclassic.pdf

16

The Rupture of Classic Maya Divine Kingship from the Perspective of Postclassic Archaeology, Iconography, and Ethnohistory

DIANE Z. CHASE AND ARLEN F. CHASE

With the disintegration of infrastructure and political order in the southern Maya Lowlands at the end of the Classic period (largely before 900 CE), Maya governance was transformed. Perhaps most notably, during the Postclassic period (900–1542 CE) the emphasis on divine kingship that was present during the Classic period (250–900 CE) appears to have ceased, disappearing in some areas during the Late and Terminal Classic periods. With the Classic Maya collapse around 900 CE, the southern Maya Lowlands faced substantial population movements and a massive reduction in population from which it never fully recovered (Turner 2018), whereas the northern Maya Lowlands witnessed some population continuity and potentially inmigration from the southern lowlands (e.g., Cowgill 1964b; Schele and Freidel 1990; Tozzer 1941:29). There likely was at least some differentiation between the northern and southern Maya Lowlands during the Classic period based on differences in architectural traditions, ceramics, hieroglyphic texts, and language spoken (e.g., Arnauld et al., Chapter 1, this volume; Brainerd 1958; A. Chase and D. Chase 1992; Grube 1994a; Pollock 1980; Wichmann 2006). Yet the iconography found on Late Classic carved stone monuments throughout the Yucatan Peninsula suggests that both areas practiced divine kingship during the Late Classic period (Grube, Chapter 3, this volume). And in neither area did the practice of divine kingship survive the collapse (Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume).

Evidence for the rupture of Classic Maya divine kingship may be found in various archaeological remains but is particularly notable in iconographic depictions of Maya rulers. The Classic period southern Maya Lowland

collapse is traditionally linked to the cessation in erection of dated stone monuments depicting Maya rulers and containing texts related to their activity (e.g., Lowe 1985). While some monument erection did continue into the Postclassic period, these stelae do not strictly reflect human figures but also portrayed deities and other imagery that is not consistent with Classic period iconography, strongly suggesting a shift away from Classic period kingship. Other Postclassic period material remains also point to changes in governance. Archaeological data from sites like Santa Rita Corozal and Mayapan indicate the existence of multiple contemporary multiroom, palace-like residential structures that are distributed throughout the site rather than simply being concentrated within the city's epicentral architecture. Postclassic period ritual deposits are also different from their Classic period counterparts, often being placed throughout the settlement with easy-to-understand imagery that suggests broader community engagement. Additionally, ethnohistoric records suggest that the shift away from divine kings and dynastic kinship coincided with a movement toward more collective forms of government involving a separation between secular and sacred offices.

Some of the impetus for a change in governance may have to do with the introduction of different forms of political organization and religious practice from other parts of Mesoamerica (e.g., Cobos, Chapter 15, this volume; Ringle et al. 1998). Throughout their history, the Maya were in contact with other populations in Mesoamerica, and it is likely that the worsening political conditions in the southern lowlands invited interlopers from coastal and central Mexico who took advantage of the political instability, spelling the death knell for divine rulers. However, the loss of divine kingship may also have resulted from a reversion by the Maya to their own underlying principles of collective governance.

While previous models for the Maya collapse once attributed it to Mexican mercenaries who entered the southern lowlands looking for spoils and easy conquests (see Adams 1977; see also Binford 1968; Sabloff and Willey 1967), it is now clear that this transition and the impetus for it were far more complex (Turner and Sabloff 2012). Long-term social stresses and abandonments affected portions of the southern lowlands differentially over more than 140 years; instability and warfare may have enhanced the adoption of new religious practices by the remaining populace, ones that did not accord with the principles of divine kingship. William Ringle, Tomás Gallareta, and George Bey III (1998) have argued that a Quetzalcoatl cult entered the Maya area in association with the more general collapse. Elizabeth Graham, Scott Simmons, and Christine White (2013) have argued that the introduction of

new burial practices in northern Belize signaled a change in religion and probably other parts of society. The suggestion is that religion focused on a sacred office that was not held by the secular ruler (see Ringle 2004:211). The split between secular and sacred would have effectively nullified divine kingship.

Thus, the degree to which changes in governance and the collapse itself were internally as opposed to externally driven is a subject of debate. Ethnohistory, iconography, and archaeology together provide us with a more nuanced perspective on changing governance and the demise of divine kingship among the ancient Maya.

Ethnohistory

Providing us with substantial information on Maya political organization (Figure 16.1), ethnohistoric literature relating to Postclassic Yucatan is fairly explicit that the area's elite had ties to central Mexico. The inference to be drawn from these accounts was that the political vacuum created by the Maya collapse was occupied by outsiders to the area, yet there is evidence of Maya continuity as well. In speaking about the "hereditary aristocracy" of Maya nobles known as *almehen,* Ralph Roys (1957:5) notes that "although most of its members had Maya names, they all considered themselves to be descended from Mexican invaders." According to Roys (1943:59, 1957:3), these Mexican invaders appeared in the Yucatan during the tenth century and were responsible for the political unification of Maya provinces or *cuchcabals* at two points in time—the first centered on Chichen Itza and the second centered on Mayapan. His reconstructions imply that, with the break-up of the Classic Maya world, new forms of political and religious organization were introduced to the northern Maya Lowlands.

To a large extent, the ethnohistorically based interpretation about Mexican presence in the Maya area has led to a conundrum regarding our understanding of the transition between the end of the Late Classic and the onset of the Early Postclassic in the northern Maya Lowlands. Much of the research focus has been targeted on Chichen Itza regarding its relationship to central Mexico (particularly with the site of Tula, Hidalgo) and to its temporal placement within the archaeological record (see Cobos 2006; Wren et al. 2018), with arguments over both issues. Chichen Itza was initially positioned as the only known large city spanning the Early and Middle Postclassic periods in the northern lowlands (Tozzer 1957), a placement that was openly questioned by other researchers (Pollock 1965:393). However,

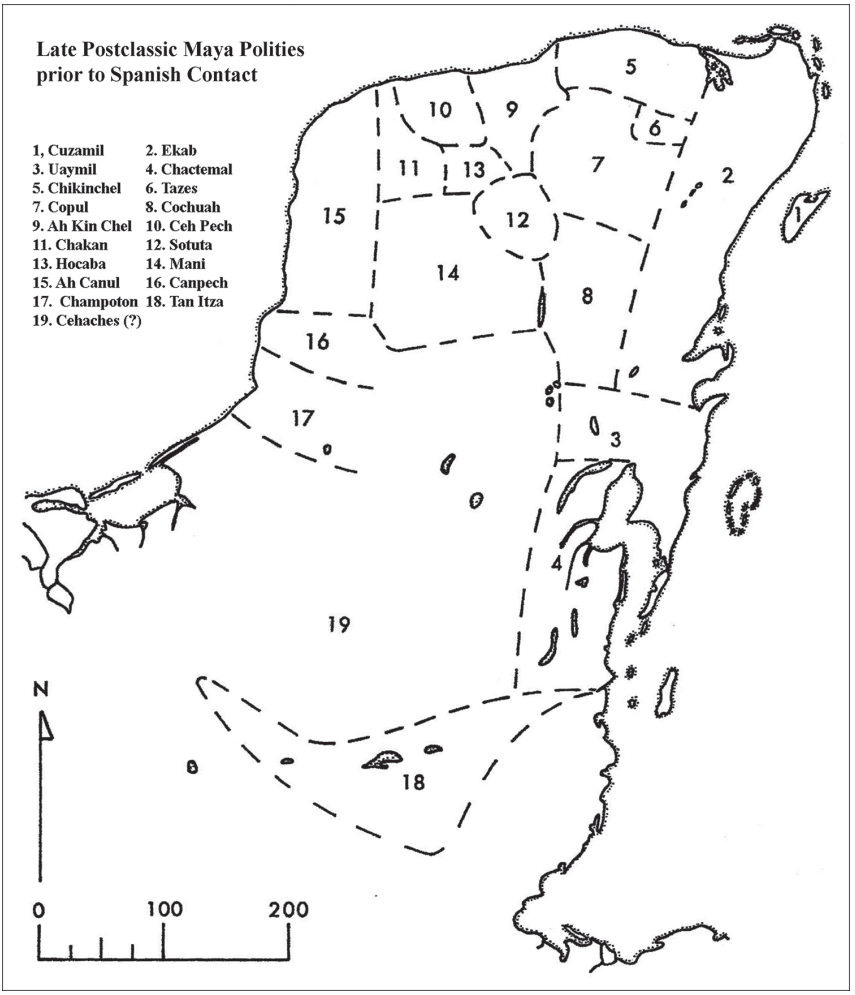


Figure 16.1. Maya Postclassic polities derived from ethnohistoric sources (modified after Roys 1957).

the precise dating of Chichen Itza was difficult to establish because of the loss of archaeological context for the materials excavated by the Carnegie Institution of Washington (the paper tags containing the context information for most artifacts were destroyed before any analyses could be done [see Brainerd 1958]). Because Chichen Itza was architecturally and ceramically different than other sites in the northern Maya Lowlands, its exact temporal dating remained problematic. However, excavations in northern Belize at the site of Nohmul in 1979 and 1980 revealed Chichen-related architecture (a gallery patio residence and circular building) and Chichen-related ceramics

in clear Terminal Classic context, strongly suggesting an earlier placement (D. Chase and A. Chase 1982; D. Chase et al. 2008). Eventually, the transcription of hieroglyphic texts from the various monuments at Chichen Itza fostered a dating of the entire site as being Terminal Classic (Grube 2003; Grube and Krochok 2007; Schele and Freidel 1990:356–358). More recently, however, there has been an attempt again to place the bulk of Chichen Itza's development within the Early Postclassic period (Volta and Braswell 2014; Volta et al. 2018), something effectively argued against by Ringle (2017). But, as Cynthia Kristan-Graham and Linnea Wren (2018:9) have noted, "Chichen Itza's chronological issues are far from settled." Additionally, there are different perspectives on the direction of impact between the Maya Lowlands and central Mexico.

Alfred M. Tozzer (1941) wrote the seminal treatment of Maya ethnohistory, footnoting and cross-referencing Diego de Landa's written account of Maya lifeways shortly after the Spanish conquest of the Yucatan Peninsula. It is clear that Tozzer adopted the ethnohistoric claims for Mexican origins for the Maya Postclassic elite because his next major work was a treatment of the iconography and archaeology of Chichen Itza as a verification of the amalgamation of Maya and "Toltec" peoples in the Postclassic period (Tozzer 1957). Tozzer's (1941, 1957) two studies subsequently formed the backbone for work at the Late Postclassic city of Mayapan by researchers of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (Pollock et al. 1962), who used the ethnohistoric, iconographic, and stylistically derived dating as a framework to interpret the archaeology.

Regardless of dating, the ethnohistoric documents make it clear that there was still an almost divine aspect to Maya nobles at the time of contact. The Maya nobles, or *almehen,* met with the Spanish and were accorded very differential treatment. In situations of communication, the Spaniard in charge of the conquest of the Yucatan had to speak to a lesser Maya lord or "cacique" through the shielding of a cloth, indicating a perception on the part of the Maya of severe status differences. As Charles Erasmus (1968:181–182) has pointed out: "The cacique of Loche received Montejo in a reclining position and would speak to him only through a cotton cloth suspended between them like a curtain" (see also Roys 1943:63). The ethnohistory also reports that Maya subject to the cacique also bowed to him, moved so as not to block his passage, and spread "their mantles in front of him" during visits; they also "protected his head from the sun with great fans of bright feathers" (Roys 1943:63). When the *halach uinic* ("real man") of the Tutul Xiu visited Montejo in Mérida in 1542 CE, he was carried in a litter and accompanied by

"an imposing retinue" (Roys 1943:61). Thus, while these lords may not have been divine, they were still treated with the highest respect.

The ethnohistoric documents also provide information on the political organizations that existed within the Yucatan Peninsula at the time of contact (Figure 16.1; see Marcus 1993:117–121 for a more detailed discussion). The documents imply that all of Yucatan had been under the control of Mayapan until its destruction at some point before the Spanish conquest. With the fall of Mayapan, somewhat varied forms of governance came to be used by the nonunified "provinces" that occupied the Late Postclassic landscape. The most centralized form of governance was one that had a *halach uinic* in charge. There were *halach uinics* in the provinces of "Mani, Sotuta, Ceh Pech, Hocoba, Cochuah, Champoton, and Cozumel" as well as "probably Ah Kin Chel, Tazes, and Tayasal" (Roys 1943:59). The role of this individual did not appear to have a religious aspect; "the *halach uinic* seems to have been primarily a war chief, like the head of the Mexican confederacy" (Roys 1943:59). The *halach uinic* could appoint *b'atab's* to rule over other communities within a given province, or the communities (*ah cuchcab*) themselves could appoint a *b'atab'* to answer to the *halach uinic;* thus, governance was both top-down and bottom-up. Towns in other provinces formed confederacies, as was the case in the provinces of Ah Canul and "probably in Chakan" (Roys 1943:62). Finally, at least one province, Copul, does not seem to have been unified, instead being noted as composed of an independent group of towns (Roys 1943:62).

The secular political rule was separated from the role of religion in Postclassic society. Tozzer (1941:27) notes that there was a high priest named Ah Kin Mai or Ahau Can Mai. This individual occupied an office and could be succeeded by his son or nearest relative. The political function of the religious leader was to give advice to the lords and to supply priests to the various towns; they were also likely allied with physicians and with sorcerers. They were responsible for learning and "books" or codices. They had specific costuming that included a feather jacket, long feather and cotton "tails," a pointed cap or miter (possibly related to Classic period headgear [see A. Chase and D. Chase 2001:Figures 4.12 and 4.13]), and an "*aspergillum,* made of a short stick finely worked" (Tozzer 1941:105). Both the miter and the aspergillum appear to have antecedents in the Late to Terminal Classic periods; similar headgear appears in iconographic scenes both on stucco and pottery at Caracol (see A. Chase and D. Chase 2001:Figs 4.12 and 4.13) and an "aspergillum" is probably shown (as a symbol of authority) on Caracol Altars 12 and 13 (A. Chase 1985a:Figures 2a,2b), on Machaquila Stela 5 (Figure

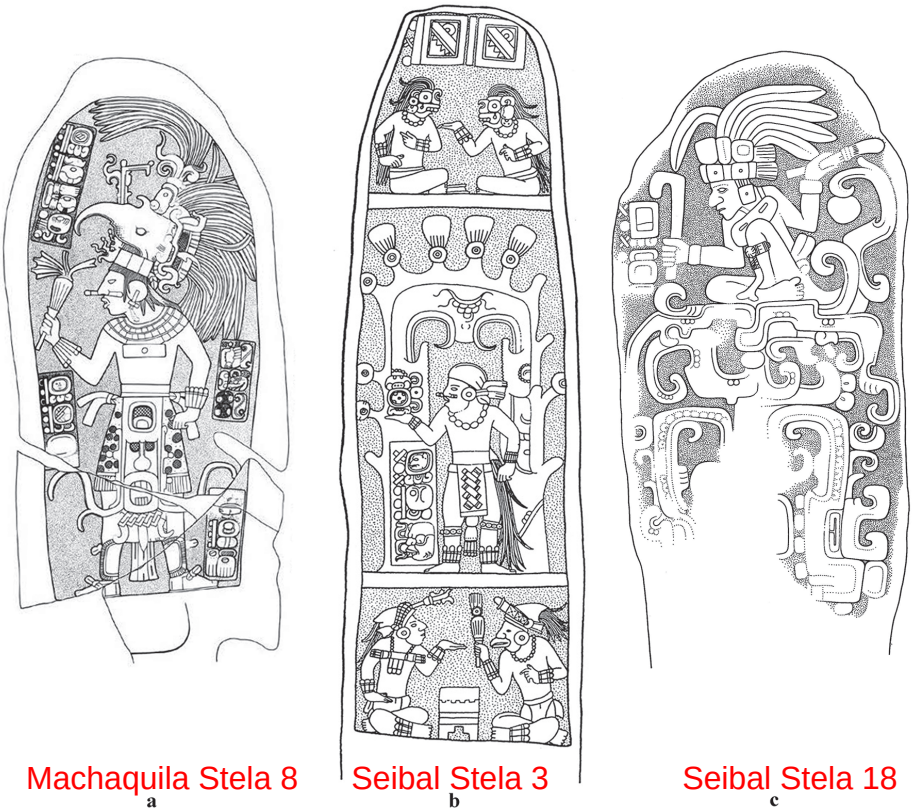


Figure 16.2. Aspergillums as symbols of authority in the Terminal Classic southern lowlands: (*a*) Machaquila Stela 8, dating to 10.0.5.0.0 / 835 CE (after Graham 1967); (*b*) Ceibal Stela 3, aspergillum in hand of wind god in lower register (after Graham 1996); (*c*) Ceibal Stela 18, aspergillum in left hand (after Graham 1996).

16.2a; see A. Chase 1985a:Figure 3 for full transition of this ruler), and on Ceibal Stelae 3 and 18 (Figures 16.2b and 16.2c; see also Graham 1990). However, in these Late and Terminal Classic scenes, both the potential miters and the staffs are associated with images of divine dynastic rulers rather than with specialized sacred leaders, indicating that the full shift in governance had not yet taken place.

Among the best studied part of the contact period Maya Lowlands are the peoples that occupied the central Peten of Guatemala, where the various entradas have provided an excellent outline for governance and religion (Avendaño y Loyola 1987 [1696]; Jones 1998). These documents separate the secular (Kan Ek' Ajaw) and sacred (Kan Ek' AjK'in) offices. The secular leader had a ruling council of 22 members that "included the high priest, eight

senior-junior district/provincial governors (*b'atab'*) plus thirteen individuals called "*ach-kat,*" who were "*k'atun* priests" (Rice and Rice 2018:30–31). Prudence Rice and Don Rice (2018:25) see "political continuities or structural equivalencies" in the central Peten data between the Classic and Postclassic periods, but it is also evident here that there has been a significant break between any combined secular and sacred divine king.

Iconography

Postclassic iconography, in contrast to the earlier Classic period, does not generally illustrate rulers carrying out ritual ceremonies. Deities are shown on some of the carved stone monuments that span the Terminal Classic and Postclassic periods (e.g., A. Chase 1985b:Figure 9; Proskouriakoff 1962:Figure 12; Ruppert and Dennison 1943:Figure 55b), and other monuments show multiple individuals engaged in negotiation or ceremony (see A. Chase and D. Chase, Chapter 13, this volume). Late stelae from Mayapan, Yucatan show the principle individuals holding aspergillum, similar to the Terminal Classic monuments in the southern lowlands (Figure 16.3). It would appear the roles of priest and secular ruler separated during this transition and that the investiture of secular rulers, while quite important and ritually complicated, was fairly standardized throughout Mesoamerica and did not place these individuals in a divine status. Ringle (2004) has specifically argued that many of the buildings at Chichen Itza that contained carved iconographic scenes were used for investiture ceremonies that were common throughout the rest of Mesoamerica. Claude-François Baudez and Nicolas Latsanopoulos (2010:3) note the lack of specific portraiture relating to a ruler at Chichen Itza and suggest that there was rule by "a paramount king" and by "a high priest, probably the second-ranking figure in the state," who "shared power" with a "political and military elite." However, Rafael Cobos (Chapter 15, this volume) uses the iconography and archaeology to parse the existence of a series of late rulers at Chichen Itza, while noting changes in the nature of governance at the site.

By all indications, during the transition between the Classic and Postclassic periods, secular rule was separated from religious rule, something that continued until Spanish contact. While respect and status were accorded to the Maya rulers of the Postclassic period, with the separation of secular and sacred rule, they lost the divine aspects afforded to rulers during the Classic period. Individuals were integrated into broader Mesoamerican systems through contact and trade (e.g., Masson and Peraza 2010; Smith and Berdan

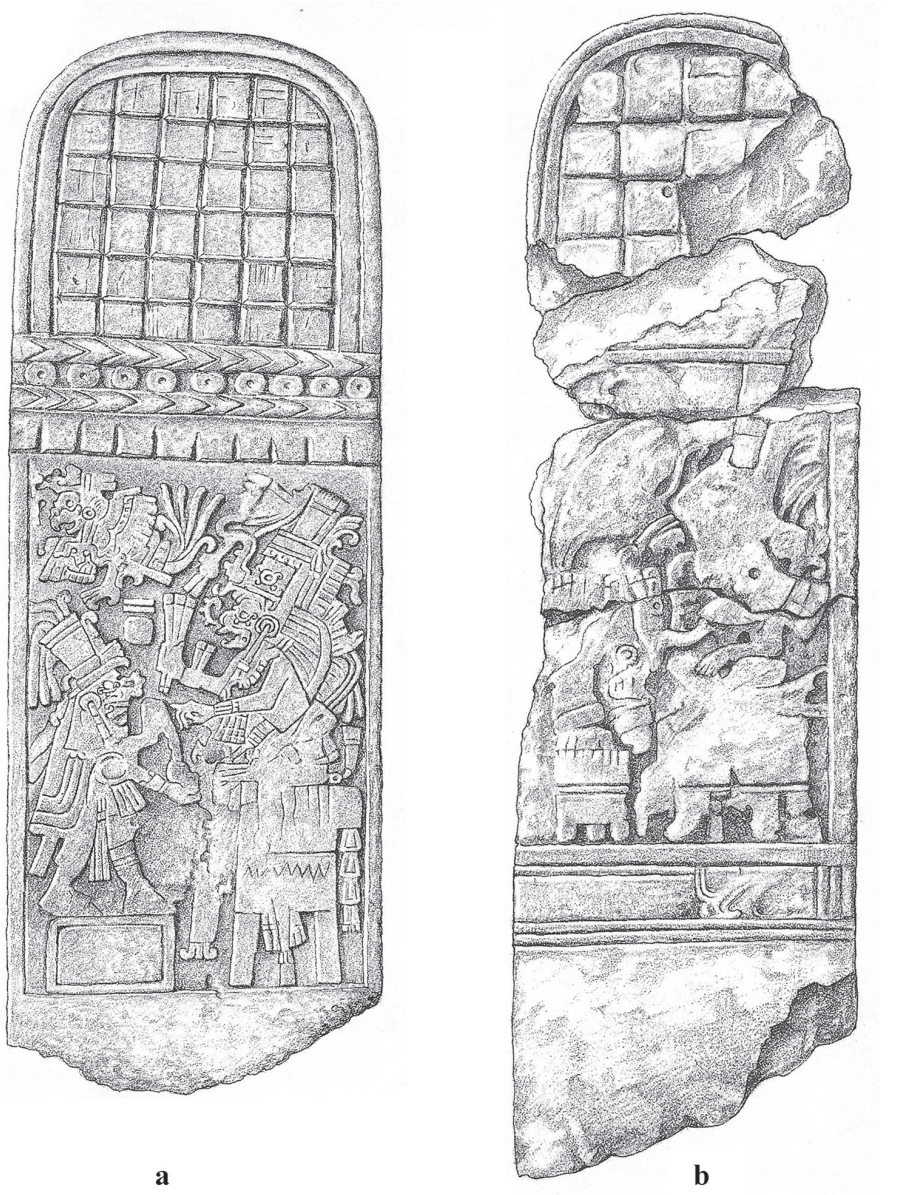


Figure 16.3. Aspergillums as symbols of authority in the northern lowlands at Mayapan: (*a*) Hacienda Xcanchakan Stela 1 (after Proskouriakoff 1962:Figure 12a); (*b*) Mayapan Stela 9 (after Proskouriakoff 1962:Figure 12d).

2003). At the same time, central Mexican deities like Ehecatl, Tezcatlipoca, Tlalchitonatiuh, and Xipe Totec were introduced into the Maya area and can be seen in art (Thompson 1942, 1943) and in ceramics (Thompson 1957). Additionally, central Mexican iconography is displayed on a stucco altar from the public architecture excavated next to Cenote Itzmal Ch'en Group at Mayapan (Chowning 1956). Yet there is clear continuity in architectural, iconographic, and material culture at Mayapan from earlier Yucatec traditions (e.g., Milbrath and Peraza 2009).

That the adoption of central Mexican deities and iconography was not done in a wholesale way can be seen in the known Maya codices. As Elizabeth Hill Boone (2003:217) has noted, Maya "almanacs are structured differently than the Mexican ones, and they feature distinct texts, in the form of glyph blocks, that pair with images." Yet, even though "correspondences are few," "they show that the Maya were attuned to Mexican divinatory and religious traditions, and referenced or borrowed from them on occasion" (Boone 2003:217). Boone (2003:217) points out that Mexican gods are shown within the Dresden Codex (Thompson 1971:220, 1972:68–69) and that they are accompanied by hieroglyphic texts that "give phonetic soundings for Nauhatl deity names (Riese 1982; Taube and Bade 1991; Whittaker 1986:56)." The "Madrid Codex has two Mexican-style almanacs of the kind found in the Borgia Group codices" that "must be derived from a central Mexican source" (Boone 2003:219–220). Thus, the iconography and hieroglyphs in these codices provide evidence for a shared belief system, in spite of geographic distances, but one that was still distinctly Maya. However, this integration was certainly dictated by Maya traditions as can be seen in the continuity of mostly Maya iconography in their codices (Boone 2003). Thus, while it is clear that there was significant change in the cosmological view that was used by the Maya during the Postclassic period, it was still continuous with Maya past practices.

Archaeology

Archaeologically, it is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate Postclassic rulers. There are, however, several markers that could be used to identify them. One would be the location and nature of residence. Another would be the presence of elaborate burials. Yet another would be the presence of prestigious artifactual materials. While there is evidence for elite individuals and residences during the Postclassic period, these are not localized in centrally

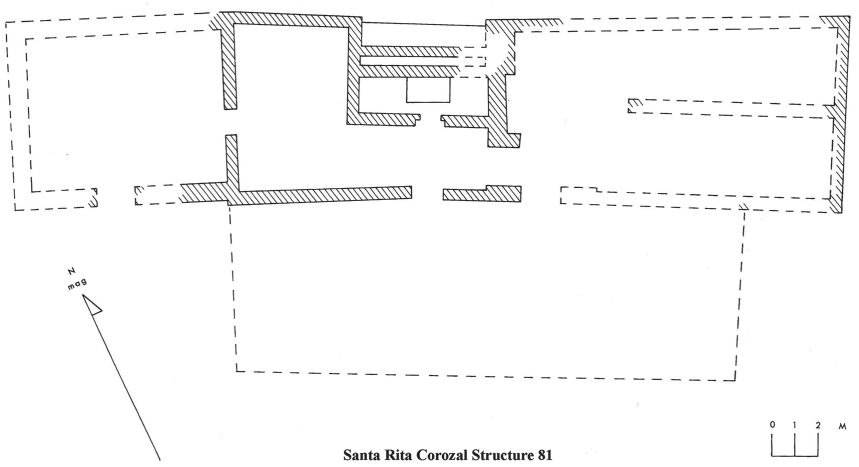


Figure 16.4. Santa Rita Corozal Structure 81, an example of a Postclassic *principal* house, showing both the plan of the building and a photograph of the interior shrine room (after D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figure 7).

located temples and palaces, as was the case for Classic period dynastic rulers (see D. Chase 1992).

While multiroom structures that could be termed as "palaces" exist at the Postclassic capitals of Mayapan (Pollock et al. 1962) and Santa Rita Corozal (Figure 16.4; see also D. Chase and A. Chase 1988), they are multiple in number and distributed throughout the city. There does not appear to be one single royal palace. Archaeology instead appears to correlate with ethnohistoric descriptions of several high-ranking lords or "*principales*" or *ah cuchcabs* being associated with specific wards within a town (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:69; Roys 1957:7–8). Shrines were located either within palace structures or in separately constructed buildings within high-status residential groups.

Importantly, it would appear that most Postclassic multiroom buildings had multiple functions (A. Chase and D. Chase 2013a; D. Chase 1986)—potentially more than was the case for their Classic period counterparts.

Burials are similarly problematic. The ethnohistoric documents for the Yucatan indicate that the highest-status individuals were cremated when they died and then had their ashes placed within idols (Tozzer 1941:36, 62). Excavations at Mayapan have produced a large number of burials that occur in both residential and ritual locations; there are skull burials and mass burials associated with ritual (e.g., Masson and Peraza 2007), but cremations are not well documented in the archaeological record. No burial at Mayapan has been identified as a high-status ruler. At Santa Rita Corozal a very high-status individual was excavated within Structure 216 (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:54–56). Although not visible before excavation, the Structure 216 interment was placed directly beneath the remains of a low shrine located within a multiroomed line-of-stone building within the west-central part of the city. In standard practice for Santa Rita Corozal, the two individuals in this burial had been wrapped in cloth coverings that had been held together by copper clasps. They were interred in a seated position next to each other. The southern individual was sickly at death, and his body had been perforated by a dozen stingray spines and long copper needle. The northern individual was the primary interment, as indicated by a spondylus and jadeite necklace, by a spondylus platelet bracelet, and by gold and turquoise earrings set on an obsidian backing with decorative gold bells (Figure 16.5). A large square block of red hematite was set in front of them to the east. This is the highest-status individual uncovered at Santa Rita Corozal; whether he was a ruler cannot be ascertained.

At least for Santa Rita Corozal, there is discontinuity in burial practice between the Classic period and the Postclassic period. Classic period Santa Rita Corozal follows the general burial dictums that are known for the rest of the Maya area in that individuals are placed within graves, crypts, or tombs usually on a north–south axis. An Early Classic ruler's tomb has also been excavated at the site that shows strong relationships to the traditions found within the southern Maya Lowlands (A. Chase 1992; D. Chase and A. Chase 2005). Postclassic burials are found in a variety of poses (both flexed and extended), but the highest-status individuals are usually found seated upright and are often situated beneath small shrines that mark their locations (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:16, 44). This burial position is not found in the Classic period at the site and represents a break with the earlier traditions;

Figure 16.5. Gold and turquoise earrings from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 216 and a photograph of the burial with which they are associated (after D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figures 29 and 30; main body of earring is ca. 5 cm in height).

indeed, seated burials are quite rare during the Classic period (e.g., Welsh 1988).

However, while there is seemingly discontinuity in elite burial practice, there is evidence for cosmological continuity found in many of the Postclassic caches from Santa Rita Corozal. These caches were distributed throughout the city of Santa Rita Corozal, usually in higher-status residences (D. Chase 1992:Figure 8.2). They come in multiple forms, and many of the Santa Rita caches portray deities that are both known and unknown from Classic period iconography. Some of the cache containers may be related to diving figures (Figure 16.6); they look most like *yahui* (supernatural beings) known from Oaxaca that come down to received offerings (see Nuttall 1902:69), but diving figures are also known from Lowland Maya art dating to the Classic (see upper mask on Tikal Structure 5D33–2nd; Miller 1986:Figure 18) and Postclassic periods (see diving figures in Tulum Structures 5, 16, and 25; e.g., Miller 1982:Figure 81). Other cache containers represent earth monsters with snakes emanating from the corners of their mouths, iconography similarly found in the Classic period (see middle stucco masks associated with Tikal Structure 5D33–2nd; Miller 1986:Figure 16) as well as in Postclassic art (e.g. D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figure 15b). Also present are representations of God N, generally thought to symbolize rebirth (Miller 1982:Plate 28, lower register; Schele and Miller 1986:Figure 47).

Still others are figures that were likely assembled in caches to illustrate a specific ceremony and its offerings. The figure caches of Santa Rita Corozal are perhaps the most interesting in this regard in that they provide evidence for both *uayeb* (5 days at the end of the ancient Maya year) ceremonies (D. Chase 1985a, 1985b) and for creation mythology (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988, 2008a). There is also a focus on Maya cosmology. One of the figure caches from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 213 contains an explicit view of Maya creation mythology. The four *b'acab's* or *pauahtuns* (aged earth deities who held up the sky) are placed at the corners of the world, represented by a lidded urn (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figure 24a); they are all in the act of bloodletting through their penises while on the back of giant sea turtles (Figure 16.7). Their predicament is an illustration of how they survived the current world destruction (the Maya believed that the world had been destroyed three times and that they lived in the fourth version of the world; Schele and Freidel 1990:430) and helped to usher in a new day. A dozen deer, dogs, and *pisotes* (four of each) were situated south of the urn around the southern *pauahtun.* Within the urn an individual wearing a miter with long cloth tails was seated on a portable stool (Figure 16.8)—the Postclassic

Figure 16.6. Painted cache vessel from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 81 (after D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figure 8c; figure is 14.5 cm in length).

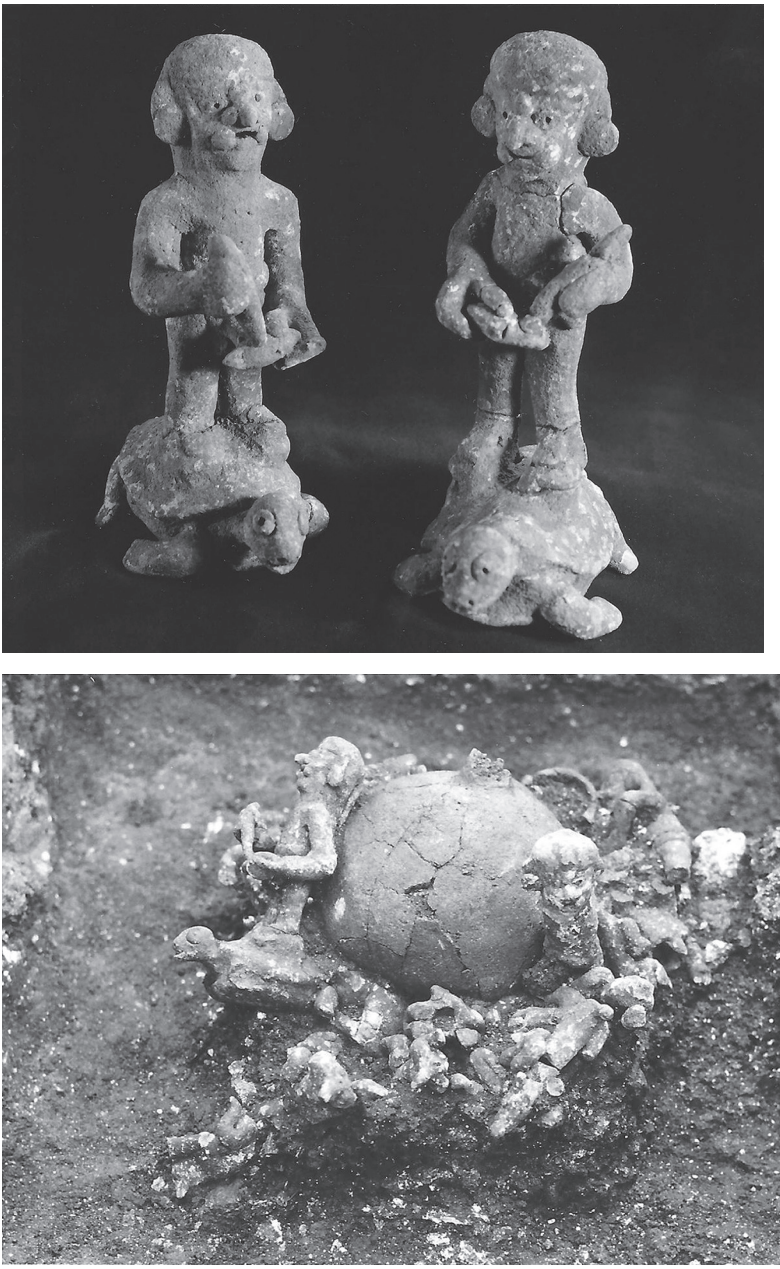


Figure 16.7. Figurine cache representing the creation of the Maya world from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 213, showing two (of four) *bacab* blood-letters and the cache in situ in the fill of the building (see also D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figures 24 and 25; *bacabs* are ca. 16 cm high).

Figure 16.8. Photograph of central figure from the creation cache in Santa Rita Corozal Structure 213; the individual is seated on a stool, wears a miter, and blows a horn (see also D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figure 25b; figure is 9.5 cm high).

equivalent of a throne and also seen associated with deities on Mayapan stelae (Figure 16.3a)—blowing through a conch shell to usher in the new world (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figure 25b); beneath the stool was a small triangular piece of jadeite surrounded by four white shells, representing the Maya "quincunx"; eight other figurines (four male monkeys and four other "receptive" animals) surrounded the figure within the urn, representing the potential for fertility and procreation.

It is perhaps significant that some of the male human figurines that are known from the Santa Rita caches wear miters. Besides the central figure in the Structure 213 creation scene, miters are found on two of the four seated warrior figures (Figure 16.9) from another figurine cache in Santa Rita Corozal Structure 183 (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:58–59); the miters are found on the two warriors that are deities while the other two warriors have human faces and flattish helmets. If the ethnohistoric descriptions of priests are applicable, this would indicate that warrior deity figures (D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figure 33g) were viewed as religious figures and that the human bloodletters for the Postclassic period were likely Maya priests. In the Classic period the Maya king assumed this role of letting blood for world continuity; in the Postclassic period, this function appears to have been associated

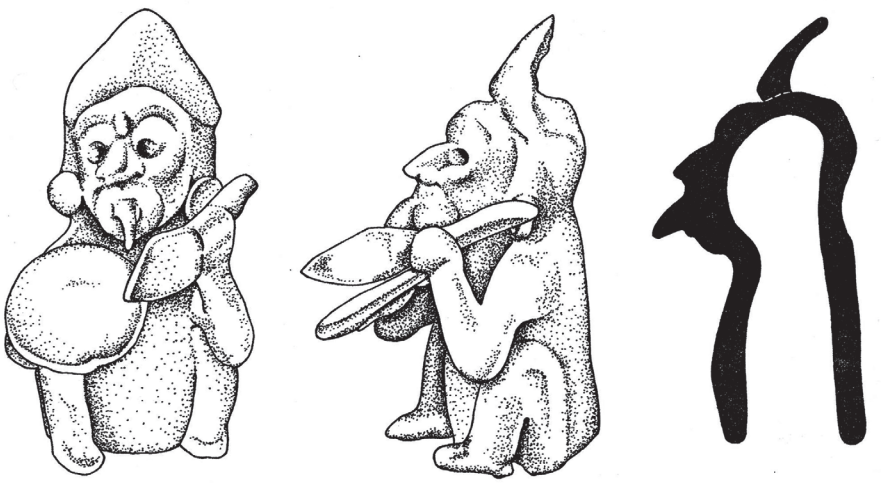


Figure 16.9. Drawing of a seated warrior figure with deity markings, wearing a miter, from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 183 (after D. Chase and A. Chase 1988:Figure 33g; figure is 9.1 cm in height).

with the deities and priests. Thomas Gann (1918:59–63) found an elaborate figurine cache in Santa Rita Structure 24. Among the 49 modeled images in the urn were three seated individuals with human faces who were wearing miters and were seated on stools while carrying out bloodletting (a single ceramic penis in the urn probably completed this set of four); there were also four upright individuals in this cache with helmet-like headgear who likely represented the *pauahtuns,* but they were not bloodletting, in contrast to the cache from Santa Rita Corozal Structure 213; none of the warriors in the Structure 24 cache wore miters. Rice and Rice (2018:30–31) have identified "a kind of soldier-priest" with oversight of prophecies having to do with warfare; they were called *ach-kat* in the ethnohistoric record of Peten, Guatemala; in Yucatec, *ach* or *aat* is "penis," so the figurine associations between warriors, priests, and bloodletting found at Santa Rita Corozal are appropriate.

What is significant in this discussion is the fact that the act of sacrificial bloodletting (D. Chase 1991), so central to the role of Classic period divine kings, appears to have been appropriated by deities and priests rather than rulers in the Postclassic period, at least in the iconography of Santa Rita Corozal. In our estimation, this fact alone indicates the breakdown of divine kingship after the Maya collapse. However, as important as changes in bloodletting customs are continuities in practice related to the materialization of

time and in evidences of collaborative or collective action (D. Chase and A. Chase 2021). While not necessarily consistent across the entire Classic period Maya Lowlands, certain Classic period sites showed use of ritual offerings that were linked to temporal cycles. In Late Classic period Caracol, Belize, caches were deposited in concert with temporal cycles (*katuns;* A. Chase and D. Chase 2013b). Significantly, like their Postclassic period counterparts, these caches were located in residential groups throughout the site and were not only associated with epicentral temples or high-status households (D. Chase and A. Chase 2001), indicating that rituals were household-based and not tied to any epicentral ruler.

Conclusion

While it is convenient to assume that foreign contact helped lead to the change in governance and the rupture of Classic period divine kingship in the Maya Lowlands, it is possible to take a slightly different stance. Rather than assuming that divine kingship and Classic period Maya culture was the standard norm, it may be useful to think of it as an accentuated anomaly—a failed experiment within Maya history and within Mesoamerica. In this case, foreign elements were blended with underlying Maya culture and belief systems to create the collective governance models of the Postclassic and Historic periods.

Although inferred to exist in the Late Preclassic period with proponents pointing to the San Bartolo murals for potential confirmation (Freidel 2016:274; Taube et al. 2010), divine kingship has been clearly documented for only one portion of Maya history—the Classic period (250–900 CE). And for this time, there have been suggestions that numerous divine kings existed (e.g., Schele and Freidel 1990), sometimes located in polities with capitals within relatively close proximity to each other—some 76 km in the case of Caracol and Tikal. Classic period warfare appears to have functioned as a mechanism for removing divine kings from their previously esteemed positions (A. Chase and D. Chase 2021). Small-scale provincial polities with divine rulers could occupy relatively small kingdoms, perhaps as small as 315–865 square kilometers during the Classic period (e.g., a polity radius of no more than 10 to 15 km, such as Minanha, Belize; Schwake and Iannone 2016). However, this system of microcosms of divine kings appears to have disintegrated at the end of the Classic period when faced with greater warfare, trade, and globalization in the Mesoamerican world. Thus, the focus on a singular central figure representing the divine king on carved monuments

was replaced by portraits of multiple individuals of similar stature at sites like Caracol during the Terminal Classic period, suggesting the end of divine kingship before the proposed Mexican incursions of the Postclassic period.

The population levels for the Late Classic period Maya Lowlands (e.g., Culbert and Rice 1990) are also high enough to indicate that successful governance would have had to have relied upon bureaucracies to manage day-to-day functions; these bureaucrats would also have likely threatened divine kingship. That the Classic period Maya could exist without divine kings within their capital cities is also clear in the archaeological data. Caracol existed successfully and in fact flourished while its divine kings were occupying the conquered city of Tikal; even when Caracol lacked evidence for divine kingship in the eighth century, its population flourished (D. Chase and A. Chase 2017). While the demise of divine kingship occurred at some places in the Maya Lowlands during the Terminal Classic period, changes to kingship continued to evolve into the Postclassic period. This was further fueled by greater contacts with others outside the Maya area, specifically in central Mexico.

In sum, we would argue that divine kingship reached the end of its productive lifespan during the end of the Classic period. While nearby sites could each claim divine status, the increasing population of the Late Classic period led to more conflict, which in turn led to the removal of various rulers from divine status. As greater integration and communication occurred throughout Mesoamerica and as Maya cities grew in size, becoming more urban and complex, pressure was also placed upon governance systems. At this same time population movement among sites was significant (e.g., Price et al. 2010; Wright 2012), also potentially undermining the divinity of any one ruler. By the Terminal Classic period divine kingship was no longer tenable. The iconography related to the transition to the Maya Postclassic period illustrates the adoption of other forms of governance and religion. Postclassic political and religious organization merged aspects of underlying and older Maya principles of governance with fundamental elements from broader Mesoamerica. Divine kings, the hallmark of a polarized series of feudal-like Maya states that lasted over 500 years, ultimately did not adapt with the times and failed.

17

Colonial Maya Discourse on the Rupture and Transformation or Continuity of Pre-Columbian Kingship

An Ethnohistorical Analysis

TSUBASA OKOSHI

In the colonial documents written by Spaniards we may read the testimonies of Maya rulers telling the story of their origins, going back as far as the beginning of the Postclassic or even the Terminal Classic period. The purpose of these historical records was to prove before the Spanish authorities the legitimacy of their claims as "natural lords," in the sense that they had not usurped the government of their lands (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:75, 76). Under the new regime, they wanted to keep their privileges as "indigenous nobility" bearing the title of "don" or even the rulership of their political entities. This entitled them to the exemption of tribute in kind and service and to the rights of receiving personal services, of having and riding horses, of carrying rifles, and so on (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:43, 76, 88).

The stories told to the Spaniards, together with other narratives written by the Maya in their own language, were traditionally used to reconstruct the geopolitical organization of the provinces (*cúuchcabalob*) in the Late Postclassic period. Ralph L. Roys's long influential model (1957), in particular, defined the territory-based polities found by the Spaniards in Yucatan as having fixed lineal borders. Recent studies, however, show that such polities were actually jurisdictional forms of government based on interpersonal relations between supreme rulers (the *halach uinicob*) and subordinate lords (the *batabob*). This model could also be seen inside the *batabilob,* where each *batab* exercised his authority on the basis of a communal agreement with his

ah cuch cabob, who represented and spoke for their people. Such a system gave the *batabilob* and *cahob* a certain degree of autonomy, depending on their geopolitical distribution. Thus, proximity to the ruler's residence was not important, and his domain had no spatial continuity or precise boundaries (Okoshi Harada 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Okoshi Harada and Quezada 2008; Quezada 2014; Rice and Rice 2018:32). This sort of participation by the common people in the polities of the Late Postclassic period played a significant role at every level of government, a topic that has not been discussed from an ethnohistorical point of view.

A comparative analysis of the stories told by the Maya elite shows a shared discursive structure: it justifies their legitimate right to govern by listing the negative aspects of the preceding rulers. Such disqualifying criteria were based on a sociopolitical principle called "moral ethics" shared by all members of the community. For rulers and officials, this meant an expected norm of behavior on the way they should exercise their authority. In fact, common people were always represented in the discourse as an acting agent whose growing anger was a constant motive for rejecting the ruler's kingship. The "reestablishment" of the sociopolitical order became the basis for the uprising against an abusive government as well as for the legitimation of the incoming ruler.

In my opinion, the analysis of these narratives should focus on the common people as a sociopolitical agent that could determine the fate of kingship. This is a subject that has been little explored by ethnohistorical studies, in contrast to Mesoamerican archaeology (e.g., Inomata 2004, 2006; Joyce et al. 2001; Lohse and Valdez 2004).

This chapter examines the narrative concerning the rupture, transformation, or continuity of kingship, highlighting the importance of commoners in the policies of Maya rulers. The commoners' participation as an anonymous agent was indeed quite active in this sociopolitical process. In particular, I take the examples of Motul, Ek Balam, and Mayapan (Figure 17.1) to demonstrate how the Maya rulers judged previous governments and how they justified their own. I also examine the Maya terms *mektan cah* and *kamci cah,* which reveal the Maya concept of rulership, and I speak of how rulers were required to adopt "ethical" and "moral" behavior. Finally, the relationship between rulers and commoners is discussed within the process of rupture, transformation, or continuity of kingship described in the colonial documents.

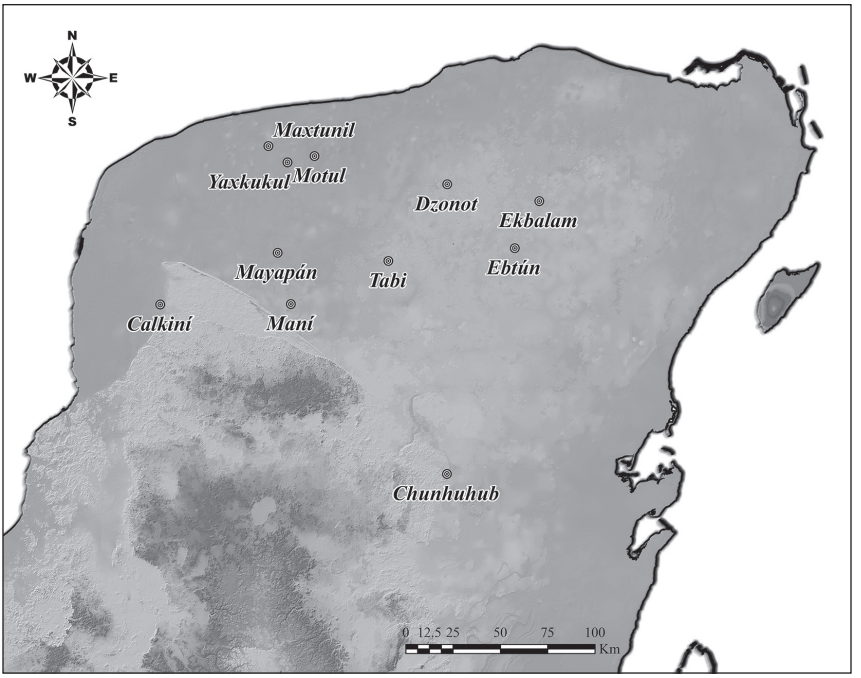


Figure 17.1. Locations of all sites mentioned in this chapter (drawing by Manuel Eduardo Pérez Rivas).

Evidence in Colonial Documents

Motul

According to Juan Pech, the *cacique* and governor of Motul, and his principals, Motul was settled by Sacmutul, who first came with his people from the East. He founded his domain with its capital in Motul, where his descendants ruled for 140 years. Captain Kak u Pakal, however, came with "people of war"; he killed the last ruler and abandoned Motul. Many years later another "lord and captain," Noh Cabal Pech, "close relative to the great lord of Mayapan" (De la Garza et al. 1983:1:269), settled again with his people in Motul, where his descendants ruled until the Spanish conquest. The commoners showed their allegiance and respect to the Pech family: they built and repaired their houses and cultivated their lands to feed the Pech family. They also paid tribute in recognition of their government (De la Garza et al. 1983:1:269–270).

Ek Balam

In 1579 Juan Gutierrez Picon gave an account of the history of Ek Balam. The site took this name from its founder, Ek Balam, whose other name was Coch Cal Balam. Four "captains and lords" were under his command, and each one of them built an edifice. Coch Cal Balam's was the largest. They kept justice for more than 40 years. But being aware of the power they had and the many people under their command, they became arrogant and disdainful of their people, treating them with cruelty, and demanding excessive tribute. Hatred grew in the people's hearts against Coch Cal Balam and his captains until one day the people rose against him and put them all to death. However, disputes and killing ensued because many regretted the uprising (De la Garza et al. 1983:2:138).

Sometime later, He Blai Chac, from the same lineage, ascended to the throne. Upon his death, he asked his relatives and close friends to make a statue of him and to worship him as a god. This was the origin of idolatry because before that time the people worshiped only one god, called Hunab Yzamna. Then he was succeeded by a renowned lord of the Cupul lineage, who governed justly for a long time. The commoners held him in great esteem and paid him tribute. Under the Cupul lords, thieves and robbers were severely punished (De la Garza et al. 1983:2:139).

Mayapan

The story of Mayapan, told by Diego de Landa, was based on the testimonies provided by Gaspar Antonio Chi Xiu and Juan Cocom, whose pre-Columbian name was Na Chi Cocom. Mayapan was founded by Cuculcan; when he left Yucatan, the other lords agreed that the Cocom family, being the oldest and richest family, should rule the city. One of his successors, however, became greedy. He oppressed the poor and made slaves of many. The other lords disapproved of what Cocom did, and they even wanted to kill him, but they feared the "Mexicans" brought by Cocom from Xicalango in Tabasco, and they did nothing. Later on, in the mid-fifteenth century, among the successors of the Cocom dynasty was another one, very haughty, who brought more Mexicans into the city. He began to tyrannize and enslave the common people, so the other lords, condemning his attitude, gathered under the leadership of the Xiu, and they plotted to kill Cocom. This they did, killing at the same time all of his sons, save one who was in Ulua, Honduras. In this way, after living in the city for more than five hundred years, the lords abandoned

it and went back to their lands, where they established their own *cúuchcabalob* (Landa 1938:13–17).

Commoners as Agents: An Analysis of the Historical Records

The historical records show that a dynasty rupture was a consequence of two factors, both external and internal. The first one corresponds to an invasion-conquest event, as in the case of Motul. The testimony shows no interest in the details of the process but only in the role of the participant agent (conqueror) and its outcome. Therefore, it is not possible to know what kind of government Motul had, or the transformation or continuity of its ruling system after the conquest. Yet Governor Pech did not forget the legitimation of his family's right to rule by saying that they had counted on their commoners' support by way of tribute. This meant that, for the Maya rulers, the legitimacy of their kingship depended on the degree of integration of this social group, whose participation was vital for the polities.

On the other hand, the internal factor of dynasty rupture corresponds to an uprising, either by commoners or by a group of subordinate lords against the supreme ruler, as a reaction against the ruler's political misbehavior: becoming arrogant and disdainful of his people, demanding a high tribute, making slaves of the people, oppressing the poor, or conducting himself wantonly. Notice that both arrogance and concrete political acts were considered a violation of the "moral-ethical" principles that every member of society should follow. Maya rulers were obliged to incarnate such social norms *to receive the commoners' support and be worthy of the confidence placed in them.* The ruler represented the cosmic balance and harmony that supported his polity; so, in practice, his rulership had to take into account the commoners' anonymous voice. A reaction against mistreatment might revoke his mandate and eventually lead to his fall.

There was, however, a significant difference between the uprising of commoners and the revolt of subordinate lords with respect to planning. The case of Ek Balam shows clearly that the commoners' uprising against their ruler was not a premeditated act but rather the spontaneous expression of their anger once their patience was exhausted. The immediate consequence was sociopolitical instability and killing among them, something that was not foreseen by the commoners (for another interpretation of Ek Balam's history, see Ringle et al., Chapter 14, in this volume). So the continuity of

the ruling dynasty was preferred as a means to reestablish social order. This implied that, even if the commoners' voice was taken into account by the ruling dynasty, the commoners themselves did not have a clear idea of how to keep the integrity of a polity that encompassed several subsidiary political units. This required the knowledge and tactics developed by the elite and the ruling family throughout centuries of history. Thus, the commoners were incapable of organizing a government of their own without the ruler's leadership and his governing apparatus. Moral-ethical principles promoted the good functioning of the polity, but they were not the basis upon which it could be founded.

In contrast, the uprising of the subordinate lords in Mayapan resulted from the Cocom's arrogant and disdainful attitude toward his people. It is obvious, however, that the subordinate lords' personal interests also played a role in the revolt. Apparently, Cocom did not want to share with them the long-distance exchange network, an enterprise monopolized by the Cocom, who benefited from the slave trade with Honduras. In fact, when the revolt broke out, one of his sons was in Ulua (Landa 1938:18). Xiu and the other lords took advantage of the commoners' growing anger to attack Cocom, destroy the city of Mayapan, and put an end to his rulership. Their aim was to establish their own *cúuchcabalob* at different locations to take part in trade with other Mesoamerican regions. It was a well-planned act that took advantage of the commoners' claim to justify an uprising based on private interests. History shows that such expectations harbored by the subordinate lords of Mayapan proved to be true, and the Xiu were able to establish trading links with Honduras and Guatemala. In fact, the last *halach uinic,* don Francisco de Montejo Xiu, was in a position to offer luxury items from these lands to the lords attending a meeting in 1557 (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:57–58).

Nevertheless, the continuity and transformation of the political organization before and after the rupture remains unknown. This is due to the informants' interest in the authentication and legitimation of the new government after the rupture. But they also wanted to describe how the ruling family had exercised its power in accordance with the pre-Columbian moral-ethical code of conduct. Since it fell into the qualitative domain, the political organization held no interest for them. As a consequence, they assigned negative attributes to the preceding government. For instance, the story of Motul omits the political organization prior to Kak u Pakal's war of conquest as well as the one created by the Pech after the rupture. The informants legitimize the family's domain by saying that the commoners showed their allegiance

and respect to the Pech. The legitimation discourse compares implicitly the Pech government with that of Sacmutul's descendants by assigning negative traits to their last representative, who was incapable of stopping an invasion.

In the case of Ek Balam, the narrative details the political organization, which was virtually a physical representation of the horizontal structure of the Maya universe, and the continuity of government after the commoners' uprising. But when the indigenous informants referred to the polity founded by the Cupul, they remained silent about its political structure, preventing us from understanding if there was a change in the ruling system. The legitimation of the Cupul kingship took two forms—mixing value elements from various origins that reveal a colonial reality where two different cultures met and the informants' ability to incorporate Hispanic elements into their discourse: (1) assigning the last ruler of the previous dynasty a pagan element forbidden by the Catholic Church, namely the beginning of idolatry, and (2) the good government of the Cupul family, who had ruled "their province in justice."

Finally, the story of the Cocom dynasty rupture in Mayapan highlights the details of the conspiracy initiated by the subordinate lords against the supreme ruler. It holds onto the moral-ethical principles but offers no information about the transformation or continuity of the *cúuchcabalob*'s political organization that followed. The interests of Gaspar Antonio Chi Xiu, Landa's informant, were aimed at blaming the Cocom for the destruction and abandonment of Mayapan. But they also provided an image of the Xiu as fair and legitimate rulers in the Late Postclassic period and, subsequently, under the colonial regime (Okoshi Harada 2001).

"Embrace or Serve the People": Maya Ruling Concepts

The historical records show clearly how important the commoners were for the pre-Columbian political entities. Not paying attention to their dissent could eventually lead to a rupture or the ruler's removal. That is why rulers had to be aware of the moral-ethical implications when enforcing their authority. In this section I examine two Maya terms, *mektan cah* and *kamci cah,* which refer precisely to the Maya concept of rulership in the *cúuchcabalob* of the Postclassic period. Here again, I want to point out the significant role played by the commoners as recipients of the ruler's exercise of power.

In the *Chronicle of Chac Xulub Chen* we read: "*ca cahiob uai lae lai culcinaben Tah Nakuk Pech tumen in yum Tah Kom Pech u mehen Tah Tunal Pech yax ch'ibal Maxtunile* ***mektantic cah***." (When we settled here, they appointed

me, Na Kuk Pech, by my father, Ah Kom Pech, son of Ah Tunal Pech, first descendant of Maxtunil, **to govern this town**. Brinton 1969:199, 223).

According to the *Calepino maya de Motul* (Acuña 2001:405) *mektan* means "governing or ruling a town or people; being in charge of, or taking care and control of other minor units." But the morphosyntactic analysis reveals a semantic field with far richer connotations. The first morpheme, *mek,* means "embrace or carry someone or something in one's arms" (Acuña 2001:404), *tan* refers to a man's breast (Acuña 2001:534), and *cah* refers to "town" (Acuña 2001:95), which was the smallest unit in the sociopolitical organization. Thus, *mektan cah* would literally mean "hold the town in (the ruler's) breast" or "take care of the town," which was translated by the Franciscans as "to rule."

In the *Chronicle of Yaxkukul* we find another example: "*Dzocanili tun u dzabal cah u cahan te Tah Macan Pech yax* ***kamci cah*** *Yaxkukule*" (Ah Macan Pech was already responsible for the government of the town, because he was the first one **to be in charge of** the town of Yaxkukul. Martínez Hernández 1926:12). *Kam* means "to serve someone for some time" (Acuña 2001:323), so *kamci cah* means "to serve the town (during the ruler's government)." This concept is similar to *mektan cah,* except that *kamci cah* determines the duration of the domain.

These terms undoubtedly did not refer to the simple act of ruling a *cah* or town but also to the kind of rulership or even to the concept of power among the Maya in the Late Postclassic period. A ruler "taking care of his town" implied his will to satisfy and defend the interests of the people under his command. Consequently, he would receive their tribute as an act of recognition. The semantic field of *mektan cah* and *kamci cah* also predicted the existence of an interactive relationship between the ruler and the commoners, which should comprise balance and harmony, supported by moral-ethical principles that were fundamental to the Maya concept of power. In the following section I show specifically how they enforced these principles.

How to "Embrace or Serve the People": Specific Aspects of the Exercise of Power

The mechanism that prevented the ruler from exercising a tyrannical power was the bilateral communication implied by the Maya verbs *mektan cah* and *kamci cah.* It was in particular a "conciliatory negotiation" that kept the cohesion and stability of a polity. For instance, the *batab*'s authority was closely related to the satisfaction of the commoners' needs and well-being. To this

end, the council of the *batabil* offered a place for the "conciliatory negotiation" between the ruler and the *ah cuch cabob,* who represented the commoners' interests. As stated by Giraldo Díaz de Alpuche, who recorded the testimony of his indigenous informant, Dzonot:

> They also had an *indio* who was like a *regidor* (councilman). They obeyed him, even if they paid him no tribute. In their language they called him *ah cuch cab.* He was like the lord they call *batab,* who had a vote in the *cabildo* (town council). **Without his vote, nothing could be done**. (De la Garza et al. 1983:2:86)

The commoners expressed their political interests through the *ah cuch cabob,* who negotiated with the *batab* to make the people's voice be heard, under the threat of veto. Thus, the *batabob*'s policy responded in every sense to this kind of conciliatory agreement with the commoners, which was the actual meaning of the Maya terms *mektan cah* and *kamci cah.*

The same mechanism worked also at a *cúuchcabal* level, in which the *halach uinic* was not exempt from the commoners' implicit voice and interests expressed by the *batabob.* Therefore, it was fundamental for the *halach uinic* to gain the *batabob*'s goodwill by applying a redistribution system that would give him the appearance of a "generous benefactor of luxury goods from distant lands."

As a matter of fact, in 1557, don Francisco de Montejo Xiu, the last *halach uinic* of the *cúuchcabal* of Mani, set the limits of his territory to gain recognition of his lands as an indigenous political entity. Many subordinated *batabob* from the neighboring towns met with him, and, out of gratitude, he gave them 2,000 grains of cacao, five *patíes* (cotton blankets), a row of threaded colored stones, and 100 threaded green stones (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:57–58). Many of these items were considered luxury goods from Guatemala and Honduras, and they helped don Francisco assert his generosity and authority over the other *batabob.*

It is worth mentioning that the *halach uinic* did not take the lead in the council of his *cúuchcabal,* which consisted of his principals and subordinated *batabob.* The "Memoria de la distribución de los montes" (1557), the first text of the *Papeles de los Xiu de Yaxá, Yucatán,* details how they discussed the jurisdictional limits. The text reads: "*u hunmolcinah u baob ti multumut* ***ycnal*** *halach uinic don Francisco de Montejo Xiu governador uay ti cah lae* (They gathered **with** the *halach uinic,* don Francisco de Montejo Xiu, governor of this town.)" (Quezada and Okoshi Harada 2001:55). According to the *Calepino maya de Motul* (Acuña 2001:301), the Maya term *ycnal* means

"with or in the company of, in possession of, in the house or where someone is." In this context, however, it is clearly understood that the *halach uinic* was present at the meeting, but he took no active part in the deliberation. He remained silent while the others discussed the issue and came to an agreement, which was announced by him as the decision of his polity. The role of the *halach uinic* was precisely to act as a cohesive force and to legitimize the agreement reached by the *batabob,* who had a voice and vote at the council on behalf of their people.

The prudent exercise of power by the *halach uinicob* is also evident in several colonial testimonies, in which the Maya informants criticized the excessive ambition of the Spanish and their exploitation of indigenous people. Before the Spanish conquest, the tribute in service was not a heavy burden. Pedro García, *encomendero* of the towns of Tabí and Chunhuhub, said that "the natives paid every year a modest tribute, a turkey, a little amount of honey, and some maize, in recognition of the domain the lords had over them. They also served in the wars whenever required" (De la Garza et al. 1983:1:164).

Drawing from an analogy between the colonial and pre-Columbian periods, we may deduce that when the commoners worked for the lords, (e.g., in the construction of buildings), they received at least food, clothing, and shelter. This was part of the redistribution system implemented by the pre-Columbian rulers, which was in turn a way to assert their authority and supremacy over the others.

At the same time, the Postclassic Maya rulers maintained their religious authority underpinned by a cosmovision that gave them an indisputable right to exercise their power on the mass of the population. The *Códice de Calkiní* states that the Canul had always held their meetings with the lords and their entourage at a cenote called Ixhalim, where the sacred ceiba tree stood. The text reads: "*uay uch yokol ch'en ti Ix Halim u kabae ti uaan yahau yaxche cuchi ti utzhi yalan tulacal uay Calkinie* (here, at the cenote of Ixhalim, where the sacred ceiba tree was before, [under which] everything was discussed, here in Calkiní)" (Okoshi Harada 2009:43). The lord of Calkiní, Na Chan Canul, was certainly in front of the sacred tree with his back turned. He embodied the symbolism of the sacred tree, acting as an intermediary between men and deities, speaking on their behalf. Thus, his words were so compelling that they became sacred. That is why don Francisco de Montejo Xiu did not say a word at the meeting in Mani until the *batabob* finally came to an agreement. His voice was that of the gods, so he had to be prudent and reflexive, an essential capacity for a ruler in the pre-Columbian Maya society,

just like the book of *Chilam Balam de Chumayel* states: "*ci oltzil yilabal u cux olalob u mektanma u tzicilteilob* (The discretion with which they govern their subjects shall be viewed with favor)" (Roys 1933:27, 92). In other words, even an authority and supremacy underpinned by religion and cosmovision did not give the rulers the power to act at will. Their decisions were completely dependent upon the agreement reached by the members of the council, that is, the *batabob,* who represented the commoners' voice.

All the facts referred to in this section reflect the fundamental connotative meaning of the Maya terms *mektan cah* and *kamci cah.* Those rulers, who did not behave in accordance with the moral ethics implied by these terms saw the overthrow of their dynasty by the commoners' rage or by subsidiary lords acting in their own benefit on behalf of the commoners' social group. In this regard, the stability and cohesion of the *cúuchcabal* depended completely on the ruler's political ability to cultivate the commoners' loyalty, attaching great importance to the conciliatory negotiation.

Conclusions

The Maya discourse on dynasty rupture collected by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century always identifies the ruler's misbehavior as its main cause. A violation of the common moral ethics or social code was basically the only acceptable explanation that justified or legitimated the violent acts against such a ruler. This narrative arrangement is also evident in other colonial Maya documents. For example, in the first part of the *Popol Vuh* three giants, Vucub-Caquix, Zipacná, and Cabracán, are defeated by the Maya Hero Twins, Hunahpú and Ixbalanqué. The twins blamed Vucub-Caquix, Zipacná, and Cabracán for being vainglorious of "their feathers and their riches," eager to be exalted and to dominate, vain and arrogant, exalting their grandeur and their power (Recinos 1953:99, 104, 110). As far as we can see, it certainly resembles the narrative discussed in this chapter.

This can also be seen in the complaints and criticism expressed by the Maya against the Spaniards. The *Códice de Calkiní* (Okoshi Harada 2009:45) is quite explicit about this. The author blames the Spaniards for violating the "moral-ethical" norm, confirming at the same time the native concept of rulership pervaded by the meaning of *mektan cah* and *kamci cah.* The text reads: "*bay xani huntzuc xanie he tu beltahob yn ch'ibal yn talice moobili ah sitz batabili moobilix ah kekex olali bax ti than bax ti can xani* (They also put my lineage aside, from where I come from. They were crooks coveting the *batabil.* They were dishonest wicked men, unreliable [and] untrustworthy as

well)." It is henceforth understood that not coveting power, but being honest, reliable, and trustworthy were values highly regarded by the Maya. Values that were completely ignored by the European conquerors.

One can argue that such uniformity was a common literary resource used by the colonial Maya elite to implicitly or explicitly support the idea that they ruled with justice in pre-Columbian times. There is evidence, however, that this colonial perspective can be traced back to the Classic period. The fact that the Late Postclassic *cúuchcabalob* were jurisdictional entities based on interpersonal relations required the commoners' indispensable participation in the ruler's policies. For that reason, one of the ruler's main concerns was to keep the mass of the population integrated under his jurisdiction (e.g., Nikolai Grube, comment in Inomata 2006). Such interaction between rulers and commoners was what the Maya meant with the terms *mektan cah* and *kamci cah.* Terms underpinned by "moral ethics" that accounted for the behavior of both social groups.

Ruptures due to internal factors have always been explained as a problem caused by rulers, where the commoners' accumulated anger and resentment would give rise to violent acts against them. Historical data indicate that, when the people took the initiative of an uprising, they did not want to bring down a dynasty. They just aimed at removing the "bad lord." In this case, the government would continue with a new leader, who was expected to "correct" his predecessor's misdeeds. In contrast, when the subordinated lords made use of the commoners' voice to protest against a supreme ruler, the uprising was the result of a premeditated plan to bring down the previous government. It clearly marked a rupture of kingship and the introduction of a new form of organization, in which every subordinated lord became the head of his own polity. Whatever the case, though, rupture should always be analyzed in relation to common people, whose anonymous voice could affect the life of a polity. In other words, the life of a supreme ruler and his administrative staff, the nobility, depended entirely on the common people. That is why it was important for them to defend and look after the commoners' needs in order to keep a stable and cohesive domain. Hence, when talking about the pre-Columbian Maya society, we should analyze the constant and dynamic interaction between both social groups without separating rulers from commoners. In the end the people's "invisibility" provided the rulers with a more visible image. Without the commoners, the rulers would have been incapable of building and repairing their houses, temples, and pyramids.

The commoners, however, were not attached to a particular place of residence. Many Spanish conquerors reported that whenever they reached an indigenous town, the town was empty, and its inhabitants had fled or sought refuge in the forest (e.g., Chamberlain 1974; Cortés 1963), something that got worse during colonial times (López Cogolludo 1957:294). Historical data reveal that, in hard times, people abandoned their houses looking for protection against their enemies. In the case of a natural disaster—such as a drought or locust invasion—many also fled to the forest. For example, during the drought of 1796, doña Pascuala Chi of Ebtun wanted to sell her land to earn some money for the maintenance of her family. But there was no one in town who could buy it. The principals were dying, and the others had fled to the forest to survive on fruits (Roys 1939:290, 291). The mobility of the native Maya population was evident, perhaps even before the Spanish conquest. In fact, recent archaeological studies have confirmed such non-elite phenomena (Inomata 2004; Scherer et al. 2018; Suzuki et al. 2018). But the elite could not survive without the support of the common people, whose absence undoubtedly meant the end of a polity.

In every sense, the polities based on interpersonal relations had to deal with the potential instability caused by the commoners' mobility, whose vulnerability to the internal and external crisis impacted considerably the rulers' survival capacity and their polities. Therefore, when considering "rupture," we should never forget the common people, who provided the polities with a tense yet dynamic life.

DISCUSSION

18

The Collapse of the Southern Lowland Classic Maya City-States

Dynastic Disaster and Network Failure

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CHLOÉ ANDRIEU, AND PAOLA TORRES

The "Mystery" of the Classic Maya Collapse

Much of the "mystery" of the Classic Maya collapse we archaeologists have ourselves created. Scholars are uncomfortable about the broad and sensationalist nature of such colloquial terms as "collapse" and "civilization." Yet scholars have had great difficulty suggesting more precise yet still objective, rather than leading, alternative terms. Indeed, we seem to have created a fog of methodological and conceptual confusion that may be preventing us from identifying some clear patterns in the data from the past three decades of research.

Here we first aim to mitigate the epistemological chaos through critique of the problems in language and concepts to more effectively consider some of the economic and political elements that may have been involved. Then we use strategic management network theory, applied to a large corpus of data. From that, we speculate on how those pieces might fit together to help to characterize and to explain, at least for the Southern Lowlands, the end of the Classic Maya network of city-states and dynasties and the decline or abandonment of their cities.

Obstacles to Understanding

Understanding the late eighth to early ninth centuries in the Southern Lowlands or any other period of change does not depend on data recovery alone, or even the quality of analyses. Progress in any discipline is achieved

by developing new interpretations from the record and then critiquing alternative hypotheses based on data, analysis, and logic. Then evaluation of alternative interpretations helps guide further testing and directions for research. While that sounds straightforward, in fact, in dealing with social phenomenon conceptual pitfalls abound. In that minefield *words matter!*

No one enjoys clarifying or debating terminology, rhetoric, logic, or epistemology. Indeed, scholars tend to object more vociferously to criticism of their logic or language than of their research, data, or analyses—seeing critique of concepts and logic as having connotations of intellectual superiority. To the contrary, today the errors discussed below in framing concepts or use of unacceptable rhetorical practices are most often used to attack or dismiss the hypotheses of others: Negative critique of alternative views are carried out through manipulation of language rather than evidence or analyses. Other issues of language result in unnecessary or nonexistent disagreement (see Cowgill 1988).

Language, logic, and frameworks for interpretation may be the primary impediments to understanding the end of the Classic Maya cities in the Southern Lowlands. Therefore, we must begin to discuss these issues to evaluate research results clearly and fairly.

Words: "Collapse" and What Collapses

George Cowgill warned us years ago that much of the disagreement over theories of collapse was due to differing definitions, "levels" of analysis, conceptual frameworks, and other issues of terminology, rhetoric, and logic (Cowgill 1988). Although Cowgill's chapter is much cited, his warnings have largely gone unheeded. Cowgill's prime example examined the confusion about the definitions of "collapse," which led scholars to debate apparent disagreements when, in fact, their compatible data and related solutions were obscured by a lack of parity in terms, characterizing events or processes in very different regions of a civilization or by being unaware of differing levels of proximate (final) causes of collapse and deeper ultimate (root) causes of problems or crises.

Regarding the term and concept "collapse," a degree of consensus was nearly achieved with Joseph Tainter's definition (1988) of "collapse" as "a relatively rapid drop in the level of sociopolitical complexity" of a complex society—workable, but still unclear. It only led to debate on what is considered "rapid" and the degree of "fall" in "sociopolitical complexity" required to apply the word. Also, the end of a complex society or system of any kind may *not* always involve a "drop in the level of sociopolitical complexity." Often it

is a fragmentation of a political or economic network or a rapid replacement of a political or economic network with a different system with an equally complex, or more complex, but quite different system.

A key to all of this is understanding that "civilizations," states, economic systems, and complex societies are *networks,* not just a number of centers with shared elements of culture, economy, religion, and so on. It is the particular nature of the network that defines that system, and it is that network that "collapses," regardless of continuity at some sites or persistence of cultural, economic, political, or ideological elements.

On "collapse" denotations and connotations, archaeologists often prefer to use the word "transition," yet in *denotation* it is no more precise than "collapse," and in *connotation* it biases frameworks for comparison toward more gradual—less rapid or abrupt—change. In fact, a "collapse" is a "transition" but a more disjunctive one. Similarly, the word "transformations" is often applied to the same phenomenon but with connotations implying that it is the same entity—in this case, a network of institutions—that is changing internally into new forms rather than being replaced with new institutions. Again, connotations of gradualism and continuity are privileged by use of language. The evaluation of data and analyses of alternative interpretations are unfairly diminished.

Therefore, we should be aware that the empirical question that we are examining is the *degree* of disjunction in process and of change in institutions and their integrating networks between one period and another or between one system and another. Again, network models allow us to address issues in a more specific and meaningful way.

As far as the specific debate over which overarching terms are used for any of the concepts involved, philosophers of language learned long ago that terms signifying broad concepts can only be made clear through use of phrases, sentences, or, most often, paragraphs, not through any individual word.

Concepts: "Causality"

The single greatest challenge to our interpretations is the even more abstruse word and concept of "cause" or "causality." As Cowgill also warned, this is a matter of "levels" of causality, and archaeologists and climatologists create false disagreement by arguing over "causes" that are, in fact, compatible but at different levels in the causal process—since it is a process, not a "factor" or an event (e.g., Cowgill 1988; Demarest 2004b, 2006). In the case of societies, there can be characteristics, initially strengths of the society, that have

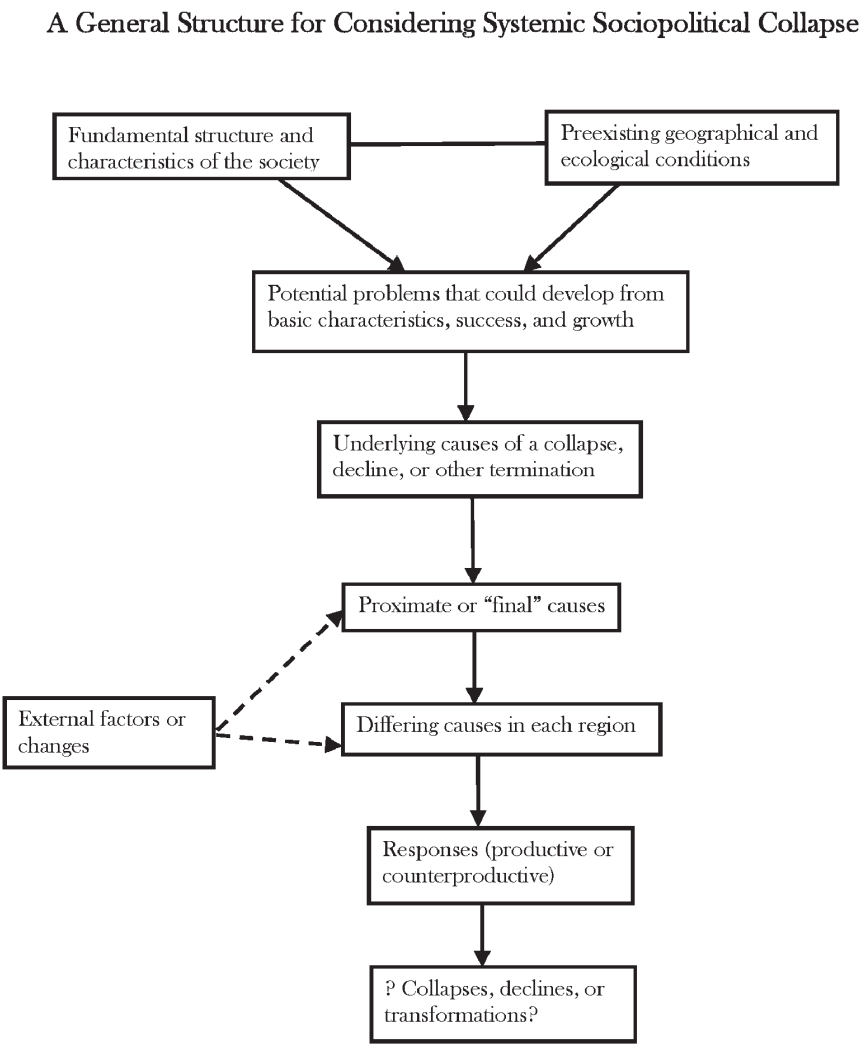
A General Structure for Considering Systemic Sociopolitical Collapse
Fundamental structure and characteristics of the society
Preexisting geographical and ecological conditions
Potential problems that could develop from basic characteristics, success, and growth
Underlying causes of a collapse, decline, or other termination
Proximate or "final" causes
External factors or changes
Differing causes in each region
Responses (productive or counterproductive)
? Collapses, declines, or transformations?

Figure 18.1. A heuristic schematic of the layered nature of causality.

potential vulnerabilities. The latter vulnerabilities can, over time or with changing circumstances, become root or "ultimate" causes, and later, for internal or external reasons, these can lead to the "proximate" or final causes of collapse that can be manifest in different ways in different regions. Along the way responses by agents or leadership are critical and can be productive in mitigation or counterproductive, only intensifying crises (e.g., Demarest 1992, 2004b; Demarest et al. 2016).

To help with clarity, and to avoid digression into a Kantian philosophical treatise, in discussions of causality we generally provide some kind of simplifying (and simplistic) heuristic device on causality like that given here (Figure 18.1). Again, the most important level in this schema regards responses, either productive or counterproductive, since social or political or economic responses by leaders or others can slow, mitigate, or even stop development of a problem into a crisis and then into a "collapse."

Figure 18.1 shows graphically why scholars debating any form of collapse, or really any other process, can be in unperceived agreement (Cowgill 1988). It also shows why the "end," "time," or "date" of a collapse, transition, and so on is difficult to specify without clarification of the process, which can seem to be very abrupt in its last phase, but often a civilization, a network, a society usually arrives to that sudden crisis through a thermostatic process, a punctuated equilibrium, leading gradually to a dramatic break point. Furthermore, Figure 18.1 reminds us that the significance of the change can only really be assessed by considering the later "recovery" or post-disjunction political or economic systems and assessing the degree and nature of difference from previous formations.

Rhetoric: Language Games

In our considerations and debate over alternative interpretations, it has become increasingly common to use, usually inadvertently, unacceptable rhetorical devices such as leading language, use of word connotations, shifting the burden of proof, and so on. In interpretations of the change from Classic to Postclassic Southern Lowland Maya civilization, the most ubiquitous rhetorical devices, debilitating to progress on a complex issue, are variations on *reducio ad absurdum.* This usually is done through uses of words or phrases whose "connotations" implicitly hyperbolize an alternative interpretation, or shift terminology, or interpret a term to render an alternative statement absolute, creating an "all or nothing" dichotomy, thus shifting to a higher burden of proof needed for the alternative hypotheses, often to an unreasonable level.

For example, in discussion of the ninth century in the Southern Maya Lowlands, articles often begin with a fairly reasonable definition of "collapse," for the late eighth- to early ninth-century change, such as Tainter's "the relatively rapid drop in sociopolitical complexity" or "the disintegration of a political system." Later, however, data are presented that supposedly contradict any "collapse" characterization by requiring a collapse to be devastating to the cultural system, population size, ideology, or other factors

at an absolute level. For example, an explanation of an abrupt collapse implicitly must be total and global, as in criticisms like "many sites still have significant populations," or "a dynastic center survived at site X and Z," or "in later centers they still had features X, Y, C, F, and G?," or "many aspects of the Classic Maya cultural or economic traditions continued," as is almost always the case even with the most profound disintegrations of political or economic systems or networks.

Geographical Framework and Units of Analysis: Geography and Chronology

Flaws in an alternative interpretation are also often asserted by citing evidence from regions that were consciously and explicitly omitted from another scholar's temporal or regional framework for their generalization, as discussed below.

Note that here the authors of this chapter are applying our hypotheses and generalizations to only the *Southern* Lowlands in the Classic period, a reasonable scale for analysis of processes. The result of more broadly expanded temporal and spatial units is that continuity is privileged since important patterns or processes of change are obscured, such as some of those discussed below.

Combining the data on any phenomenon into enormous units of space and time can reduce both conceptual and chronological resolution. Currently, many, if not most, generalizations or assertions on the end of Classic Maya societies incorporate sites and data points from the entire Maya Lowlands, north and south, and from a period ranging from as early as 700 to as late as 1100 CE. Such a framework renders almost impossible the identification of the critical patterns and processes that occurred within large, yet somewhat smaller, units of time and space. The result of describing patterns over such very large-scale analytical frameworks is an inability to clearly identify many specific events and changes. This leads to a methodologically created "gradualism," underestimating or missing altogether disjunctions or, worse, leading to denial of radical change, crises, or collapse, as seen, for example, in James Aimers's much cited synthesis, "What Collapse?" (Aimers 2007), a clear example of "collapse denial" via huge frameworks and shifting definitions.

Part of the underlying problem that often leads to such unenlightening frames of reference, discussed in more detail elsewhere (e.g., Demarest et al. 2020a; Demarest et al. 2020), is the current unacceptable state of ceramic chronologies in Maya archaeology. As was recently lamented by Joseph Ball

(2018), insufficient ceramic lab work has resulted in almost no progress in intersite or regional comparative ceramic chronology. Even in individual site chronologies Southern Lowland Terminal Classic periods usually lack an end date, implicitly exaggerating the length of occupation. Elsewhere we have discussed that current interpretations of artifact distributions to assess marketplace presence or gender work areas, and so on, are often unverifiable since artifact patterning actually combines distributions from periods of 150 to 500 years (Demarest et al. 2020a).

The ceramic chronology problems are even greater and more significant in the study of the ninth-century post-dynastic occupations since chronologies are usually lumped into a single long phase (cf. Becquelin et al. 1994 and Taladoire 2008). Furthermore, at many sites those deposits are scattered, ephemeral, and less closely related to architecture. Note that only ceramics can provide dating that covers entire sites and intersite areas and can correlate and cross-date sites and zones elsewhere. Radiocarbon or textual monument dates are absolute dates that only apply to the context in which they are found, and both dated monuments, and the usual locations of carbon samples have led to an epicenter focus that becomes increasingly problematic for the end of the eighth and early ninth centuries at most sites where dated monuments are scarce or absent and deposits are generally thin.

The "Terminal Classic" Concept: A Major Obstacle to Progress on Studying Classic to Postclassic Change

The combined consequence of these weak chronologies is that most so-called Terminal Classic occupations have very low chronological resolution, making it impossible to elucidate events or any rapid change in the process and unconsciously minimizing the evidence for a well-dated late-eighth-century Southern Lowland general "wave" of dynastic collapses (see below). Careful examination of most Terminal Classic deposits indicates that occupations are probably much shorter. Even at places like Ceibal, with its unusual level of revitalization, Takeshi Inomata and his team now estimate that the scale of architecture was minimal and that the kingdom almost immediately began to decline and lasted only two or three generations, dwindling away by the end of the ninth century (Bazy and Inomata 2017; Inomata et al. 2017).

The problem is compounded by the protean nature of the "Terminal Classic" concept and term. This is evident in the compendium of data and interpretations, *The Terminal Classic in the Maya Lowlands: Collapses, Transitions and Transformations* (Demarest et al., eds. 2004), which presents a corpus of data and interpretations from many regions with the points of view of 52

scholars in its 23 chapters. In the end, the editors of that volume who had imagined comparative consensus to at least some degree, instead faced a cacophony of contradictory voices, a Tower of Babel, with the most obvious conclusion being that the term "Terminal Classic" could stand for any period from A.D. 750 to 1100, in any region, with any set of material correlates.

The amorphous "Terminal Classic" concept helps to mask poor ceramic chronologies and minimizes the pressure on archaeologists to improve them through more investment in lab work and midden excavation. To advance in understanding of the ninth century, the concept of a "Terminal Classic" period should be relegated, like "Protoclassic" or "the Q complex," to its rightful place as a footnote on the early history of Maya archaeology.

The Nature of the Southern Lowland Classic Maya Economic and Political System: A "Community Network" of Economic Partners

As touched upon above, states, "civilizations," complex societies, or any system are all networks. "Causality," particularly in the Classic Maya case, is best conceived of as a process beginning with the fundamental characteristics of the Southern Lowland Maya political and economic network, their strengths, the nature of their potential vulnerabilities, and then how those vulnerabilities may have developed into "underlying," "root," or "ultimate" causes of crises, and then to the final "proximate" causes of crises or collapse to which polities or other leadership groups can respond with productive, mitigating actions or counterproductive ones, the latter only accelerating systemic collapse (see Figure 18.1). Thus, an understanding of the disintegration of the Southern Lowland dynastic network must begin with some fundamental traits that made success possible but that later became factors in political and economic failure.

Whatever disagreements on the specific characterizations of the Southern Lowland Classic Maya period economy, one thing is certain: it was a highly successful, archetypical community economic network (Figure 18.2), as designated in network theory and as applied in strategic management studies, economic sociology, and organizational theory (e.g., Breschi and Malerba 2007; Cowan and Jonard 2004; Davis 2016; Demarest et al. 2020b; Sytch et al. 2012; Tatarynowicz et al. 2016).

A "community network" of any kind is characterized by exchange and collaboration with multiple shared partners (Tatarynowicz et al. 2016). The factor central to their success is that economic and political relationships and

Figure 18.2. Part of the extensive agricultural terrace systems of Caracol (after Chase and Chase 1998b: fig. 1).

exchanges between any two entities in the system are stabilized and legitimated by sharing established relationships with many of the same economic partners. The sharing of partners—in this case, other lowland city-states—creates specific expectations and establishes trust in contracts, exchanges, and expectations (Das and Teng 1998, 2001; Zucker 1986; cf. Golden and Scherer 2013). They also have a common set of "economic ethics" (Goodenough and Cheney 2007). The multiple partners also have similar forms of creating and interacting with understood expectations, of requirements and forms for the legitimation of economic practices, and of a shared "economic culture" and exchange ethic embedded into broadly similar cultural systems. Even if there are significant differences between states, there is a parallel nature and similar degree of embeddedness of their economies in other aspects of politics and ideology (Dutton and Baum 1996; Friedland and Alford 1991; Oliver 1996; Uzzi 1996).

The features of community networks are created by, and in turn accelerate, a much greater relative proportion of exchange between partners within a community network as compared to the scale of trade with economies outside of that network. Before the common rhetorical technique of hyperbolization and dichotomization is applied to render absolute that statement on internal versus external levels of exchange, note that the assertion is that community networks, however great their degree of external exchange, tend to have a higher proportion or relative percentage of exchange within the

system as compared to the larger relative higher proportion of exchange with out-of-network partners that is seen in "breakaway" or "open" exchange networks. It is a matter of relative proportions, not overall scale, of such economic exchanges.

This also means that competition with partners will be much more, not less, intense within the community network, often leading to conflict and separation or, conversely, takeover of partners (e.g., Das and Teng 2001; Davis 2016). We see this pattern as a normal part of the history of the centers and political economies of the Classic Maya Southern Lowland states (e.g., Demarest 1992).

Nonetheless, regardless of which economic entity is dominant, and despite conflicts, long-term stability of economic practice is maintained by the mitigating effect of sharing multiple exchange partners and ever more similar norms and expectations that maintain the nature and stability of the system (Davis 2016; Sytch and Tatarynowicz 2014; Tatarynowicz et al. 2016). Thus, paradoxically, competition and conflict become elements in both the scale and the success of interactions within the system. Such community networks lead to great economic success and greater stability as compared to less stable, less predictable dyadic (one of one) exchange with centers or entities outside of the system (Davis 2016; Doz 1996; Sytch and Tatarynowicz 2014).

However, on the downside, community networks have a tendency over time to become less receptive to out-of-network economic partners. This can lead to a slower pace of change and adaptation over time since it is new participants that tend to bring new mechanisms or variations in economic practices (Cowan and Jonard 2004; Davis 2016; Whittington et al. 2009). Thus, while community networks have the advantage of long-term stability, over time they can be at a disadvantage in changing economic environments.

A contrasting system is seen in "breakaway" or "innovation networks." Those systems are more dynamic but highly unstable, as can be seen at Cancuen and some other centers, where new economic partners were sought outside of the general Southern Lowland network and then, by adding more new partners to its exchange network, new practices and great wealth were brought to Cancuen, but also with high risks and instability (e.g., Demarest et al. 2020a, 2020b; Freeman et al. 1983).

Note again that these are relative statements; to see that they are correct, one can contrast the Southern Lowland network with the Cancuen and southwestern exchange system, a breakaway or "open" network that formed strong relationships with out-of-network non–Classic Maya Highland and

Mexican economies (Bishop et al. 2005; Demarest 2013b; Demarest et al. 2020b; Demarest et al. 2020). That much more open network system connected Cancuen with new non–Classic Maya centers, bringing new ideas, new products, and great wealth—but with high risks that became apparent at the end of the eighth century.

The Eighth-Century Apogee/Collapse: Spectacular Success and Growing Risks

Between 650 and 750 to 780, depending on the region, Maya civilization—that is, the Southern Lowland Maya divine kingship city-states—reached a peak of success manifested in the architecture; the number of cities and states; the scale of rituals, sculptures, grave goods, population; and the grand infrastructural systems from causeways to massive reservoirs. Most, if not all, of these features had been present since the rise of lowland cities in the Preclassic and continued to grow in scale and number to the eighth-century crescendo.

A major energetic foundation of this apogee and the intensity of community network exchange was the increasing scale of agronomic infrastructure in reservoir systems and varied field adaptations. It is important to note that the hydraulic systems were only numerous and significant in the Elevated Interior Region (EIR), the natural limestone plateau of the interior of the central and northern Peten and of the interior of far southeastern Campeche and southern Quintana Roo. There, in contrast to the surrounding Maya regions, surface water in the form of rivers, lakes, streams, and springs was scarce since water filtered down deep to a subterranean water table via a "false geological fault" (Dunning et al. 2012). Particularly in that region an especially strong feedback cycle developed between politics, infrastructure, and religious spectacle. That, of course, led to more population and more investment in infrastructure and ideological mechanisms to control it.

This Southern Lowland "community economic network" may have developed a series of specific problems as a result of its success. Three of those challenges that were primary among risks were "infrastructural entanglement," hypercoherence, and accelerating status rivalry. While the latter has been much discussed, the other two factors might have been even more problematic. There was the growing and irreversible dependence and cost of its infrastructure, infrastructural entanglement (Hodder 2011; Iannone et al. 2015), as well as growing investment in massive construction and ritual that were needed to legitimate and culturally embed those costs (Granovetter

1985) and the increasing stratification of its economy. These systems initially expanded during periods of great success, yet they had to be maintained subsequently, regardless of favorable or unfavorable economic or political conditions (Demarest 1992). The status rivalry between elite groups and especially between city-states also intensified the feedback cycle of both subsistence and ideological infrastructure as rulers sought to maintain the loyalty of the population and of vassal and allied centers. The importance of that warfare and victories usually was primarily ideological aggrandizement of the holy lords, yet leading to material and labor tribute, rather than expansion of physical territory. Conquest and mergers of centers into new hegemonies tended to further intensify network exchange as manifest in compositional analyses and in the quantities of imported lithic and ceramic artifacts.

The increasing level of economic exchange may have led to another strength/weakness: growth in scale and complexity of internal integration, the key to the success of economic community networks (e.g., Breschi and Malerba 2007; Davis 2016). Current lidar studies in the northeastern Peten and adjacent areas of Belize (e.g., A. Chase et al. 2012; Wootson 2018), together with the density of eighth-century, Southern Lowland centers, suggest an extraordinary degree of horizontal integration even if chronological overlap were teased out. That level of networking would have been of tremendous benefit to any economic system.

Yet the scale of integrating systems reached a level that virtually screams both infrastructural entanglement and hypercoherence (Demarest et al. 2020b; Hodder 2011). As in all community networks, greater multipartner integration leads to success but also reduces flexibility. For a network that becomes an overintegrated, hypercoherent system, a crisis in one zone or aspect of the network becomes less likely to lead to just an economic slowdown or just an ideological adjustment and instead becomes more likely to lead to systemic "network failure" (Demarest et al. 2020b; Meyer and Zucker 1989; Schrank and Whitford 2011). Many of those elements helped the long-term success of the lowland Classic Maya political economy, combining dispersion of urban populations with divine kingship and theater-state rituals to counter centrifugal forces. Agricultural practices and hydraulic systems that formed an infrastructure effectively adapted to the demands of the dry season and, for some regions like the Central Peten (EIR), provided a solution to its scarcity of surface water.

An especially positive/negative development is that the scale and number of centers would have required increasing market exchange in foodstuffs (Freidel et al. 2017; Freidel and Reilly 2010; King and Shaw 2016), enhancing

commerce but creating an especially dangerous form of network dependence (Demarest et al. 2020a).

Agricultural overproduction is evident at small centers such as Blue Creek (Guderjan 2007) with specific environmental advantages and even more certain at a level of truly massive overproduction at the huge center of Caracol (A. Chase and D. Chase 1998b, 2016; A. Chase et al. 2012), with its sprawling system of agricultural terraces (Figure 18.2). Given the high energetic costs of transport, even if mitigated by causeway and river routes, the Caracol overproduction of redundant foodstuffs for exchange was likely due to innovative "merchant" agency, but it also implies risks at its consumer centers.

The greatest advantage of such exchange would be to the class and individual economic interests of the supervising agents of production and exchange—that is, elites at intermediary centers and merchants at various levels (Demarest et al. 2020a). During this seventh- and eighth-century apogee, it is probable, given such exchanges, that there was a growth in the number of important elites who functioned as agents of exchange, essentially "merchants" regardless of how they were identified. More than likely they were viewed simply as nobles or as elite families—or, at minor centers, even rulers or members of their families who took on such roles in the management of production and exchange or in its legitimation. The long-noted apparent eighth- and ninth-century increase in the number and status of "merchants" might be attributable to their growing economic roles, but they also relate to our ethnohistorical (and ethnocentric?) expectation that economic agents are explicitly labeled as such (Demarest et al. 2020a).

A possible increase of exchange in foods would also have created growth but also hypercoherence and a particularly dangerous form of infrastructural entanglement in the eight century, especially given the actual management of the economic system by self-interested groups who would have been increasingly difficult to control by the central divine kingship leaders.

Thus, the eighth-century Southern Lowland city-states became an archetypical example of a highly successful, ever more interconnected, hypercoherent community network. The system became deeply entangled with the infrastructural mechanisms connecting it and requiring a high degree of economic embeddedness as well as complex ideological systems of legitimation (e.g., Demarest 2013b; Demarest et al. 2020b). The latter also made it less flexible and more fragile. The stage was set for systemic network failure.

The Late-Eighth-Century "Dynastic Disaster" in the Southern Maya Lowlands

Frameworks

It is important to be precise about the parameters of time, space, traits, and critical terms in discussing the end of the Classic Maya city-states. We need to avoid the analytical mistakes described above—the overextended scale of some frameworks for study, the low resolution in ceramic chronologies, the need to limit rhetorical inventions of absolute distinctions and dichotomies, and other flaws in the discourse on the end of the Classic period. On the issue of frameworks, any description or discussion of events needs to be reasonably limited in time and space and very explicitly defined. That allows a realistic assessment of evidence with a special emphasis on the study of centers and intersite settlements with a significant amount of data and with chronological control to identify evidence of shared trends. For that reason, we address here the evidence from the eighth and very early ninth centuries, only in the *Southern* Maya Lowlands. Despite all of the problems with the data set and chronology in the south, the variability and disagreements over chronological control are much more extreme in the north, where textual dates are few, vertical stratigraphy is minimal, and architecture and material culture indicate a very different form of political economy from the south. Furthermore, using any of the alternative chronologies for the Puuc and Chichen Itza there was a significantly later date, about 150 to 200 years, for the apogee and collapse in the north, as compared to the "dynastic disaster" in the south (e.g., Douglas et al. 2016). In any case, from a methodological perspective, it is best to begin any analysis with units of data that are the best understood and identify salient patterns before building on those. Later, others can consider the northern crises and relationships between the collapse in the south to formulate testable hypotheses.

Events and Processes in the West

Using the best current evidence and clearing away conceptual, chronological, or terminological problems, a growing number of Mayanists perceive a late-eighth- and early-ninth-century "wave" of dynastic disintegrations across the Southern Lowlands (Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume). There is variability in archaeologists' definitions of a "start" date primarily because of unperceived differing identifications of the "level" under discussion in the causal chain or due to the degree of chronological control.

Currently the regions with great chronological control are in or near the Greater Pasión Valley. Those regions have been the focus of very large, regional, multidisciplinary, and multi-institutional projects since the 1960s and 1970s to the present. At Ceibal, Altar, and smaller Middle Pasión sites, the Harvard projects in the 1970s found that this region was of particular interest to the controversies over the collapse of the Southern Lowland cities (e.g., Sabloff 1973; Willey and Shimkin 1973). Then the 1989–1996 Vanderbilt projects built on that work and that theme in their research design at five major sites and many minor sites and villages as well as at intersite areas (e.g., Demarest 2006; O'Mansky and Dunning 2004). Then precision of ceramic chronology and mass of new data on collapse issues grew with the Cancuen projects from 1999 to 2006 (e.g., Andrieu et al. 2014; Bishop et al. 2005; Demarest et al. 2014; Torres, Forné, et al. 2018) and with new projects in the Petexbatun, Aguateca, and Ceibal, (e.g., Eberl 2014; Inomata 2007a; Inomata and Triadan 2010, 2014; Inomata et al. 2017). Southwest Network and Cancuen Regional projects from 2007 to the present expanded relevant evidence to many highland and southwest lowland sites and to previously unexplored regions (e.g., Andrieu and Sion 2016; Demarest et al. 2020b; Torres, Demarest, et al. 2018).

One common theme of all of these projects was the role of control of long-distance exchange, a critical aspect of all economies on the Pasión River transport corridors. Regarding the broad conclusions of the Petexbatun project (e.g., Demarest 2006; O'Mansky and Dunning 2004), it has been repeatedly stated that project members saw warfare as "the cause" of collapse. Yet in every single Petexbatun publication since 1991, it is explicitly stated that warfare was *not* the cause of collapse but a symptom or a final proximate element in the process, always presented and in charts like Figure 18.1, sometimes with warfare as an element in a causal chain. Petexbatun region centers did, at the end, collapse "in a state of" endemic warfare. Yet the reasons for the ending at most sites in the Middle Pasión region, the underlying causes, were stated to relate more to intensified status rivalry as a factor rather than problems of the subsistence and the economic network as seen in EIRs.

All of the projects mentioned above emphasized ceramic lab work leading to the refinement over time of a very high-resolution ceramic chronology, giving a more specific understanding of the events and processes of the eighth and early ninth centuries. The number and scale of investigations and more precise and broadly applicable ceramic chronology have led to alignment of dates from the entire area of major sites, minor sites, villages, rural landscapes, and cross-dating to other regions.

This evidence reveals a period of growing difficulties in the eighth century leading to crises. Recent refinements of previous detailed chronologies have shown that some families and larger groups in small farming communities were fortifying hilltop villages or emigrating at dates as early as 740 or perhaps even earlier, given the absence of ceramic markers of the post-760 period in the assemblages of some villages, including fortified ones (Bishop et al. 2005; Eberl 2014; Torres, Forné, et al. 2018). Nonetheless, the system-wide dynastic collapse in the Pasión River valley occurs primarily between 760 and 800.

By 760 the disintegration of the regional networks was under way with dynastic collapses, an end to epicenter constructions, a radical decline in population, and, at Dos Pilas, Aguateca, Arroyo de Piedra, and Punta de Chimino, destruction and termination rituals (e.g., Demarest 2006; Inomata 2007a; O'Mansky and Dunning 2004). The Petexbatun political network did not transition or change; rather, the system violently fell apart. It seems that both leaders and the populace may have largely emigrated, resulting in a drop in population at most sites to 0 to 10% of previous levels. Note that this was not due to dispersion, as sometimes is asserted. The intersite regional data, with its great degree of control in chronology and sampling, shows population reduction or abandonment at small sites and in rural areas.

The 760 to 820 Wave of Dynastic Collapse

In that regard it is notable that at many sites in other Southern Lowland regions in the late eighth century or early ninth century, ceramic assemblages incorporated significant proportions of ceramics or ceramic types and styles that are found earlier in the Pasión River valley, especially different types of fine paste wares.

The Petexbatun archaeologists had believed that this wave of Pasión River dynastic collapses was the first phase of a stepped process over a century or more, first with the Petexbatun fall but with the successful continuation of the Pasión region polities at Ceibal, Altar, and Punta de Chimino (e.g., Demarest 2004b, 2006). In other zones we envisioned decline or collapse region by region between 760 and the Puuc collapse at 950—like dominoes falling right up to the end of the Northern Lowland states (e.g., Demarest 2004b). Subsequently, Inomata's archaeological projects in the Middle Pasión region (Inomata and Triadan 2010, 2014) demonstrated that the Petexbatun collapse also simultaneously hit Ceibal, which had earlier been part of the Dos Pilas hegemony. Punta de Chimino was also besieged. Ceibal appears to have been fortified, then construction ceased before 800 and populations declined.

Note that this interpretation corresponds to our perspective and that of others who see alignment of most dynastic collapses between 760 and 820. Our only disagreement regards the implicitly equal importance of the three waves of collapse that they have proposed (e.g., Bazy and Inomata 2017; Inomata, Chapter 4, this volume). The detailed dating of the many Petexbatun and Pasión Valley sites and regions indicates that in the 760 to 820 period, there is a single procession of collapses variously dated during this period. Yet many dynasties do fall between 780 and 820, including Inomata's "second wave" of collapses. Clearly, the "first wave"—beginning in 760, an early initiation of collapse in the Petexbatun—and the "second" wave (780–820) are chronologically inseparable and together constitute the end of dynasties at the majority of Classic Maya centers, that is, the period of failure of and collapse of the Southern Lowland linked network. Inomata's proposed later "third wave" is correct but far less significant since it represents the final end period of just a limited number of surviving centers that are quite varied in their nature and poorly linked, the typical pattern of political and economic landscapes after the collapse of the linked network that constitutes the end of the overall system, the network.

Thus, the evidence of Inomata and his colleagues fits our perspectives and timing of the period and nature of the Classic Maya network collapse. The chronological breakthroughs achieved for this period will hopefully not continue to be interpreted by others as "falling dominoes" (e.g., Demarest 2004b, 2006) that this recent research has effectively negated.

Note also that our estimate for the period of network disintegration is compatible with the data and interpretations of the two other chapters in this volume that have great chronological control (A. Chase and D. Chase, Chapter 13, this volume; Grube, Chapter 3, this volume). The interpretations in those chapters implicitly acknowledge that the dynastic sequences and interactions in the post 810/820 period were greatly reduced and are between centers that are shadows of their former eighth-century manifestations, as at Caracol, or the short-lived attempts at revitalizations, the latter exaggerated by their historical texts and imagery, as at Ceibal. The network itself was gone.

Regarding Caracol, the period of apogee prior to their final very late-eighth-century and ninth-century sputtering decline follows an impressive apogee that the excavators have demonstrated was a century long and engaged in a very successful innovative economic system (D. Chase and A. Chase 2020). It was a response to developing late seventh- and eighth-century crises through an economic reformulation that was essentially non-dynastic

and that lacked the dominance of a divine ruler. The latter element led to the near disappearance of the center in the epigraphic record, leading to an underestimation of its nature and scale in most interpretations that rely heavily on textual data (A. Chase and D. Chase 1996; D. Chase and A. Chase 2017). It is notable that the return of Caracol to a divine kingship system described in this volume led to its eventual decline parallel to the other disintegrating dynastic centers dominated by holy lords.

It is significant that the three data sets in those chapters—that have a great degree of chronological control, giving their interpretations greater "weight"—coincide with the hypothesis of a late-eighth- and early-ninth-century failure of the Southern Lowland network. Their chronological control, and that correlation, are made a bit less clear by their use of the term "Terminal Classic" for most of their collapse period and the subsequent ninth-century evidence. Given the specificity of their chronologies, they have no need for that designation, which blurs the distinction between their chronologies and the generally imprecise low-resolution control at most post-dynastic centers.

In this period a growing corpus of evidence from many other centers across the south has identified large termination rituals and ritualized epicenter destructions targeting royal symbols (Iannone et al. 2016a); these were associated with subsequent declines in population or abandonments, matching the disintegration of the Southern Lowland community network. Termination rituals at many sites involved the burying of palace entrances, burning of epicenter architecture, depositing debris in elite or dynastic settings, and carefully defacing royal monuments (see, e.g., Iannone et al. 2016a).

The massive termination ritual at Cancuen, ending its dynastic system, turns out to be far from unique or even unusual—just much greater in scale. There, as described in detail elsewhere (e.g., Demarest et al. 2016), at least 60 individuals (and still counting) identified as nobles by their ornaments and osteology as well as the last king and his consort were all assassinated, but with ritual and respect. Most of their bodies were deposited with offerings in the red-painted fine masonry epicenter sacred cisterns ("killing" the site's springs). Monuments were carefully defaced, garbage and burned bone were deposited at key loci within the royal palace, and the two main palace entrances were buried in tons of clay and unworked stone (e.g., Demarest et al. 2020b; Demarest et al 2016). Then all occupation ended and never returned to the strategic location of Cancuen at the head of navigation of the Pasión and the crossroads of east–west and north–south land routes to the highlands, Mexico, and the Caribbean.

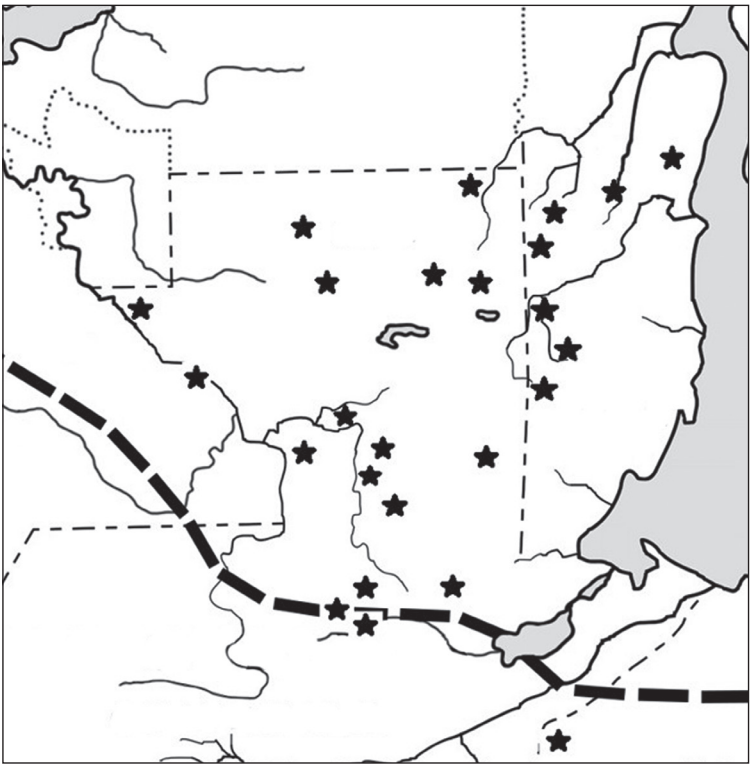

Figure 18.3. Some of the centers that experienced dynastic termination rituals at the end of the Classic period.

In the last decade archaeologists working across the Southern Lowlands have found such dynastic terminations, ritualized destruction or desacralization of royal symbols, even architecture, in this same late-eighth- to early-ninth-century period at many other sites. Even a skimming of recent literature reveals such a "formally marked" end of dynastic rule not only at Dos Pilas and Cancuen but at Arroyo de Piedra, Minanha, Chan Chin, Nakum, El Perú-Waka, Blue Creek, Caracol, Hershey, Ixtonton, Copán, Colha, Dos Hombres, Punta de Chimino, Raxruja Viejo, Río Azul, Sesakkar, Piedras Negras, Tamarindito, Xunantunich, Tikal, Yaxchilan, Aguateca, La Corona, La Linterna, and many small sites in the Greater Pasión Valley and elsewhere (Figure 18.3). Even if at some of these centers the datings or interpretations can be challenged, the identification of such a short period of polity collapses at so many sites would impact the entire community network of the Southern Lowlands. This would certainly be the case given the hypercoherence of network connections discussed above.

Certainly, there are more such terminations of dynastic centers, especially given the presence of termination deposits, even large ones, that were not originally identified by excavators; in fact, they were often confused with deposits from continuing occupation or viewed as being late construction efforts, as we had believed at Cancuen. However, at many sites there was a continuing occupation, but usually at a much-reduced level of complexity with substantial population reduction and generally without any evidence of dynastic rule. Continuity in any dynastic practice was occasionally present, but use of monuments in most such occupations involved moving them about, as at Dos Pilas, or reconstructing elements of earlier dynastic architecture, as in the illiterate reconfiguration of the hieroglyphic staircases at La Corona (Canuto and Barrientos 2013) and elsewhere.

In general across the Southern Lowlands, after large termination rituals the evidence of dynastic rule by holy lords disappears. Partial exceptions after 830 might include centers like Coba and Tonina, yet there the ninth-century constructions and monuments are few, small, and with hiatus periods and in quite different forms. These centers also dwindle away during the ninth century. Ceibal, previously cited as a continuation of dynastic rule (e.g., Demarest 2004b), is now known to be a short-lived effort at revitalization.

In any case, continuation of non-dynastic occupations and survivals at some centers is not at all inconsistent with the fact that the economic/political/ideological network had collapsed.

Post Collapse

The myth of "Terminal Classic" continuity or even prosperity in the late ninth century to an unspecified end date (950? 1000? 1050? 1100?) ignores the fact that Southern Lowland centers or post-dynastic occupations contrast greatly from the previous dynastic states in nature, scale, economy, political structure, infrastructural systems, scale of energetic investment, and the nature of material culture assemblages—and above all that, the network between them was gone.

The myth or perception of a gradual transition, continuation, or transformation—or even that there was no collapse at all—persists due in part to incorrect expectations of what a "collapse" or political disintegration should look like. Some expect almost uniform disaster, near uniform interregional depopulation, and dramatic cultural discontinuity. In comparative perspective, what is actually typical of the abrupt end or disintegration of a political and economic system is only the widespread decline, fragmentation, or

disappearance of the network binding together a state or states or any system and often the loss of much of their legitimating symbolic systems the unraveling of their integrative mechanisms, and often, but not always, a drop in the degree of network differentiation and integration (i.e., "complexity").

Any widely applicable definition of "collapse" or political disintegration is a polythetic set: some of the above stated elements of network failure are the required or most central elements. Other features such as depopulation, emigration, warfare, loss of many cultural features, and so on do occur but were not "required" or universal in the unraveling of political and economic systems.

Conclusion

The Southern Lowland Maya civilization maintained a form of large-scale urbanism with many cities, large populations, and enormous investment in economic and political and ideological infrastructure for a period lasting from about 600 BCE to 800 CE (of course with "ups and downs" along the way). If that system, that political and economic network and its urban manifestations. disintegrated in a period of 40 or 50 years, that is very rapid. Arguments about continuity of the cultural tradition and surviving Southern Lowland centers are very interesting, but they do not change the fact that a specific political system and its massive cities and its highly integrated economic community network were gone, and in subsequent periods such cities, their dispersed urbanism, and their huge economy and energetic investments *did not return* in the Southern Lowlands. Not ever! There were vigorous polities and economies on the coasts and later in the central lake districts, but the cities and their dynasties were gone.

Here we attempted to demonstrate the importance of careful logical analysis and terminology as well as the utility of applying the specific form of network theory that is used in organizational, administrative, and strategic management studies. Using their very specific concepts, in addition to an explicit and fair discourse, can give us a more workable and accurate perspective on Classic Maya civilization in the Southern Lowlands.

Viewed as a "community network," the Southern Lowland Maya civilization and its strengths, weaknesses, and trajectories can be studied using all the tools developed in those subfields of economics (e.g., Demarest et al. 2020a, 2020b). This system—as is common in such successful community networks, from corporate entities to industries to political formations—experienced a very abrupt form of "network failure," which is not rare but

seldom seen on the scale witnessed in the Maya area. It is this that should be the object of our future study.

"What Maya Collapse?" (e.g., Aimers 2007; Middleton 2017:258–260). A dramatic one! From the perspective of organizational theory, the collapse of the Classic Maya city-states in the Southern Lowlands was a widespread systemic disintegration, a breathtaking network failure.

https://www.academia.edu/68333696/The_Rupture_and_Transformation_of_Maya_Kingship

19

The Rupture and Transformation of Maya Kingship

An Epilogue

ARLEN F. CHASE, M. CHARLOTTE ARNAULD, DIANE Z. CHASE, PHILIPPE NONDÉDÉO, AND TSUBASA OKOSHI

The transition from the Classic to Postclassic periods is usually viewed as being disjunctive because of general perspectives about the totality of the Classic Maya collapse and the abandonment of most sites in the southern Maya Lowlands. Exactly what transpired during this pivotal time in Maya history—usually encompassed within the Maya Terminal Classic period (ca. 800–900/950 CE)—has been the focus of many archaeological projects, but the key factors leading to the Maya collapse and the related abandonment of much of the central landscape of the Yucatan Peninsula, Guatemala, and Belize remain debated. However, the last 50 years of research have revealed that the so-called Maya collapse was not a singular event. Rather, it took place over more than 100 years and resulted from a series of long-term processes that affected various parts of the Maya region and its widespread settlements differentially. This collapse involved many factors and multiple causalities at various points in time and space.

Of particular interest is the stability of quite a number of individual Maya governing bodies during this time. This book is an attempt to explore what happened in the political realm during this transitional period of time—what stayed the same and what changed—with an emphasis on the role of Maya kingship during this era and in the subsequent Postclassic period. Based on the chapters within this book, it appears that significant change took place. Yet the situation is more complicated than a simple singular temporal transition. It appears that kingship in the Maya area was not uniform during the Late and Terminal Classic periods, with the transformation of Maya

kingship starting prior to the Terminal Classic period at some cities (e.g., A. Chase and D. Chase, Chapter 13, this volume). There were also significant differences in governance between contemporary sites in the northern and southern lowland regions during both the Classic and Postclassic periods, with some researchers seeing divine kingship as being a late southern introduction to the north (e.g., Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume). Whatever the case, Postclassic Maya kingship in the lowlands appears to have been different from its Classic period counterparts, especially as expressed throughout much of the southern lowlands. But exactly how, in what ways, and why Maya kingship changed are still matters to be addressed.

Considerations of changes in Maya kingship invariably require an examination of the disjunction associated with the Classic Maya collapse and its potential causes. We know that many cities ceased being occupied after the Classic period and that this disjunction occurs in the archaeological records of much of the Maya southern lowlands sometime between 750 and 950 CE. With only a few exceptions in the southern lowlands (e.g., Lamanai, Belize, which has a continuous sequence from Classic to Postclassic; see Graham 1987; Pendergast 1986), Postclassic material culture is a new introduction to the area, implying a severe disjunction. Past researchers believed that this disjunction could be placed within a much shorter duration—on the order of 50 to 100 years—and that it had impacted the entire Maya area in similar ways. We now realize that this is not the case. Although it included a wave of rapid political change by 810–820 CE, the so-called Maya collapse occurred over a more extended period of time and was caused by any number of stressors operating on Classic populations.

The view of the collapse that was once espoused by researchers was largely based on a review of carved stone stelae and the tracking of the last recorded dates and portrayal of rulers at each site (e.g., Lowe 1985), combined with archaeological data for abandonment at the close of the Terminal Classic period (e.g., Culbert 1973). The cessation in construction and carved stelae portraying rulers throughout the lowlands was believed to represent significant changes in rulership and governance. Under this scenario, the collapse of the southern lowlands was interpreted to have initially occurred at the sites in the southwest. The last monument at Palenque bears a date of 9.18.9.4.4 (799 CE). The last monument at Piedras Negras in the Usumacinta area is dated to 9.18.5.0.0 (795 CE) and at Yaxchilan to 9.18.17.13.14 (808 CE). According to researchers, the site of Dos Pilas was among the first to be abandoned in 761 CE (ca. 9.16.17.0.0, but occupation continued at a series of neighboring sites; Martin and Grube 2000:64), with Ceibal manifesting

monuments dated to 10.3.0.0.0 (889 CE) or even later. The last dates at Tikal and its dependent sites of Ixlu and Jimbal also date in this timespan, being from 10.2.0.0.0 to 10.3.0.0.0 (869 to 889 CE). With the final erection of carved stelae in 10.4.0.0.0 (909 CE), all vestiges of Classic-era kingship disappeared from the archaeological record.

While the hieroglyphic texts are important, using the dates of the latest texts alone is insufficient to define and model the collapse. First, using the latest dates at various Maya sites assumes that all carved and dated monuments have been found and that these monuments were directly representative of the existence of central governance at these centers. But archaeological discovery is ongoing. For instance, most textbooks and even recent articles (e.g., Ebert et al. 2014; Sharer and Traxler 2006) have Caracol disappearing from the monumental record in 10.1.10.0.0 (859 CE), but in 2014 a new monument dating to 10.2.15.0.0 (884 CE) was discovered, lengthening the city's recorded history by 25 years (A. Chase and D. Chase 2015a).

Second, the use of latest dates on monuments assumes that the dates on these carved monuments directly reflected the continued existence of a structurally stable Maya kingship in a given location and polity. But, as can be seen from chapters within this book (e.g., A. Chase and D. Chase, Chapter 13; Grube, Chapter 3; and Helmke et al., Chapter 7), the content of what was recorded in these texts and what was iconographically represented on these carved monuments during the Terminal Classic period changed significantly (e.g., A. Chase 1985b:Figure 3), strongly suggesting that there were also changes in the structure and role of Maya kingship that predated the final carved stone monuments. One of the contributions of this volume has been to document the abrupt end of many old dynasties of the lowlands well before the last dated monuments, in one (or two) wave(s) from 760 to 810–820 CE, based on archaeological as well as epigraphic evidence mostly related to warfare, diplomatic, and building activity (Grube, Chapter 3; Inomata, Chapter 4; Demarest et al., Chapter 18, all this volume). Requiring politically specific causalities, this wave of abandonments was nevertheless followed in a number of cities by hiatus, then revival, and then another desertion. Thus, as dramatic as any documented abandonment may have been, it represented but one political moment in a longer series of distinct processes resulting in the so-called collapse (see Grube, Chapter 3, this volume).

And, third, sometimes the archaeological record provides a different or expanded view from the hieroglyphic record. Thus, while hieroglyphic texts are no longer found at Dos Pilas after 761 CE (Houston 1993) and initial thoughts were that the city and surrounding area were sacked and destroyed,

a "squatters' village" continued in use through at least 830 CE (O'Mansky and Dunning 2004:94). The interpretation of the hieroglyphic texts privileges the elite (and our nuanced interpretation about them) but does not necessarily reflect all that transpired for the remainder of the population. We are reminded by ethnohistoric documents that in Late Postclassic, Yucatan Maya rulers depended on the goodwill of their subjects and their deputies (Okoshi, Chapter 17, this volume). Classic period canonic kingship and its aftermath certainly involved various types of interaction among the "people in the land" that included both nobles and commoners (see Suzuki and Izquierdo, Chapter 9; Tsukamoto and Esparza Olguín, Chapter 11, both this volume).

Also significant in former interpretations about the ancient Maya was the correlation of sequences between the northern and southern lowlands and the assumption that the northern lowlands extended later in time, beyond the collapse of the southern lowlands—originally spurring considerations of "old" and "new" empires for the Maya (Morley 1946). Even in the 1960s, some researchers were still suggesting that the Classic Maya collapse had led some populations in the southern lowlands to have been involved in forced migrations to the northern lowlands (e.g., Cowgill 1964a). While a largely one-way population flow does not have much present-day support in the archaeological record, hieroglyphic interpretations have been used to show that there were likely long-term connections between the northern and southern lowland populations, one example being the Itza populations that are assumed to have connected Chichen Itza in the north and Lake Peten Itza in the south (Boot 2019:241–284; Schele and Mathews 1998:204).

While the Itza example may show the interconnectivity that existed between the northern and southern lowlands, it does not mean that all of the Maya political units shared the same systems of governance. This variation can be clearly seen in the discussion of modifiers and titles employed within the hieroglyphic records of the north and the south. As pointed out by Ringle and his colleagues (Chapter 14, this volume; see also Cobos, Chapter 15, this volume), there are differences in hieroglyphic titles for rulers in the north (*k'uhul ajaw* are not named; K'uk'ulkan would have replaced *ajaw*) and the south during the Late Classic that is suggestive of the existence of coeval but different governing structures for these two parts of the lowlands. These differences are also expressed within the archaeological records of the northern and southern lowlands (e.g., D. Chase and A. Chase 1992). In particular, long buildings, interpreted as being council houses that were used in a more open form of governance, are found in most northern lowland sites (e.g., Arnauld

2001) but are not prevalent in the southern lowlands, an area that appears to have had a governance structure more aligned with a central authority (or "divine king") and therefore more in need of long halls that controlled palace movements rather than fostering spaces for councils (Arnauld, Chapter 8; Barrientos, Chapter 10, both this volume). Thus, the dynastic rulers posited as existing in the south may not have occupied the north until the Terminal Classic period (Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume).

Even a brief comparison of the archaeological records for all of the Maya cities spanning the lowlands of the Yucatan Peninsula and northern Guatemala makes it clear that implied uniformity in the Maya area was not present. "The Maya" occupy a wide range of environments and speak over 30 languages today; they were as diverse in the past (A. Chase et al. 2014). While the hieroglyphic records found throughout the Maya Lowlands may have lulled Maya archaeology into seeing uniformity in the governance systems because of the use of a rather standardized prestige writing system on the carved monuments of the southern lowlands (Houston et al. 2000; but see Wichmann 2006 for some of the expressed linguistic diversity in these texts), differences in social, economic, and governance systems always lurked beneath the surface. These varied adaptations may be the underlying factors reflected in the nonrapid, multiprocess chain of the collapse. It is also clear that the southern populations were not in and of themselves responsible for migrations that led to a northern florescence. In fact, the collapse played out in very different ways in these two areas, possibly as a result of structural differences in governance and in relationships between the elite and the nonruling echelons of society (Okoshi, Chapter 17, this volume).

One wonders whether the contrast between the eastern and western lowlands was not almost as marked as between the northern and southern lowlands. By 798 CE in the eastern lowlands, Caracol reestablished the canonic recording of its sacred dynasty for one more century, whereas by 800 CE in the western lowlands, the royal palace of Cancuen was destroyed, the ruler killed, and the city deserted. From Cancuen, and also to Copán to the south as well as to Palenque to the northwest, the "underbelly" and western edge of the lowlands were under stress due to the close presence of non-Maya and non–Lowland Maya people during times of deep changes in Mesoamerica and its frontier. These pressures resulted in the closure of old trade routes that had been used for many centuries. The eastern lowlands did not experience anything similar but rather benefited from increasing maritime interactions with the north. Distinct political–economic entanglements among cities also enhanced the contrast between both sides.

The stressors leading to the Classic Maya collapse are still being enumerated by research. Largely because of modern concerns with climate change, there is a wide body of popular and scientific literature that has portrayed the Classic Maya collapse as being due to extended periods of drought (e.g., Diamond 2005; Douglas et al. 2016; Hodell et al. 1995; Hoggarth, Breitenbach et al. 2016; Iannone 2014; Kennett et al. 2012). Often the drought scenario for the collapse is combined with interpretations of an overpopulated landscape that is on the verge of ecological disaster (e.g., Diamond 2005). But most reconstructions of Maya drought are based on proxy data from lake sediments or cave speleothems that are constantly being updated and changed, especially concerning conditions in existence during the ninth century (e.g., Akers et al. 2016; Lachniet 2015; Rosenmeir et al. 2016). There is no doubt that there were serious droughts in the Maya area during their long history (Medina-Elizalde and Rohling 2012), but the Maya were a resilient people who overcame many adversities in their tropical environment (e.g., Iannone et al. 2014). And the detailed data in some of the climate reconstructions would indicate that what was once interpreted as a period of drought in the final part of the ninth century (e.g., Gill 2000) can now be portrayed as a very wet period, at least in parts of the Maya Lowlands (e.g., Kennett et al. 2012 supplementary data; see also climate data from Akers et al. 2016: Figure 9, which shows that the severe drought after 1020 CE is the only one consensually dated). In any case, while drought would certainly have been a stressor, it alone was likely insufficient to cause the Maya collapse (e.g., Haldon et al. 2018; Turner and Sabloff 2012) and is no more than tangential to this discussion on divine kingship.

Warfare has also been viewed as causing the Maya collapse. Some of the evidence for this scenario derived from excavations undertaken by Gordon Willey at Seibal, Guatemala (now Ceibal), in which the researchers highlighted the foreign influences within the iconographic corpus found on that site's monuments and modeled on its latest ceramics (Adams 1973; Graham 1990; Sabloff and Willey 1967). Based on recovered burials and residential patterns, the research at Ceibal also concluded that a new population had settled at the site prior to its final abandonment (Tourtellot 1990). In some texts (e.g., Adams 1984:263), these populations were portrayed as condottieri or marauders who raided and plundered other cities, perhaps using a different, more destructive form of warfare (e.g., A. Chase et al. 1991). Archaeological data from both Ceibal and Aguateca, Guatemala, also raise the possibility that sites could have been abandoned and reoccupied several times within a relatively short time frame (Bazy and Inomata 2017; Inomata, Chapter 4, this

volume), providing strong support for the role of violence and intergroup fighting at the end of the Classic period in the southern lowlands. Terminal Classic ceramics in the form of modeled-carved pottery that is recovered throughout the southern lowlands also contain scenes of warriors, captive presentation, and alliance (Adams 1973; A. Chase et al. 1991; Helmke and Reents-Budet 2008; Sabloff 1973)—all suggestive of a time of conflict. Using different databases, both Kazuo Aoyama (Chapter 5, this volume) and Diane Chase and Arlen Chase (Chapter 16, this volume) concur in thinking that the divine quality of Maya kings may have been lost through recurrent defeats in disastrous wars. Endemic warfare is also considered by several authors to have considerably affected political institutions (e.g. Inomata, Chapter 4; Arnauld, Chapter 8, both this volume).

There is also the possibility that one of the stressors at the time of collapse was the introduction of religious beliefs that challenged the existing political order. This possibility was initially raised for the northern lowlands, where it was referred to colloquially as the "cult of Quetzalcoatl" and associated with Chichen Itza (Ringle et al. 1998; Ringle et al., Chapter 14, this volume). It was also tied to a series of specific pan-Mesoamerican artifactual materials that do indeed appear in some of the latest on-floor deposits in the Classic-era southern lowlands (A. Chase and D. Chase 2013:Figure 4.6). In a political regime in which the ruler's relation to "metapersons" (sensu Sahlins 2017a, i.e., gods and ancestors) was so central, religion was a powerful motivator and, if combined with other stressors, it could result in drastic change in various aspects of life and in governance or rulership (Andrieu, Chapter 2, this volume). Moreover, interdependence among the southern lowland kingdoms in ritual practices as recorded on carved monuments would have made those polities vulnerable to the introduction of foreign religious elements—using Demarest's "hypercoherence" as an apt metaphor (Chapter 18, this volume).

Among the points that emerge from the chapters in this book is that the Classic period Maya were globalized (sensu Appadurai 1996). This is specifically apparent regarding the interdependence of their Late (and Terminal) Classic period economies. By the onset of the Terminal Classic period, no Maya city was self-sufficient in terms of either quotidian or prestige goods, let alone food production from city hinterlands. Instead, many everyday items were imported into the cities from elsewhere (A. Chase and D. Chase 2015b), and major centers like Tikal and Calakmul needed to import foodstuffs for their burgeoning populations (Dahlin and Chase 2014; see also Chunchucmil for food importation, Dahlin et al. 2005). Because of the symbiotic interconnectivity of the Late Classic economies (e.g., Demarest et al.,

Chapter 18, this volume), all these centers were subject to different levels of risk. The disruption of one center was likely to have had an effect at other centers, and, importantly, multiple disruptions would have been amplified because of the Maya global economy. Disturbances to the economic networks would also have had ramifications for the southern lowland institution of kingship and could have resulted in changes in structure and role, something seen both in the iconography of the Terminal Classic period and in the temporal transition to the Postclassic era. The mechanisms that demonstrate the entanglements between kingship, economy, religion, and ritual are now being clarified (e.g., McAnany 2010). Still, Caracol is a case in point where prosperity without sacred/divine kingship developed before "the 810–820 CE wave" and where non-prosperity with sacred/divine kingship (yet in a distinct regime) delayed the collapse for almost a century after that wave. Also, after the 810–820 CE wave, Naachtun evinced prosperity without kingship (Nondédéo et al., Chapter 6, this volume), while Nakum had prosperity with kingship during roughly the same timespan (Źrałka, Chapter 12, this volume). All of these coeval spatial differences suggest that prosperity and sacred/divine kingship were not necessarily conjoined; instead, the relationship was to a large degree conditioned by local urban conditions as well as by the changing context of Mesoamerican globalization. What the kings could no longer unify or stabilize to ensure prosperity, the city and its governing body would. Yet, no matter the political structure employed in the ninth century, all forms of government eventually crumbled throughout the southern Maya Lowlands.

In summary, the exercise of examining changes to the nature of Maya kingship between the Classic, Terminal Classic, and Postclassic periods has borne fruit both in pointing to a real rupture and transformation of Maya kingship and in providing grist for the formation of new research questions that can be asked and investigated by future archaeological projects.

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Index

Page numbers followed by *f* refer to figures; page numbers followed by *t* refer to tables.

Acanmul, 62
Aguateca: abandonment and reoccupation, 354–55; attacks on, 66, 70–71; bifacial artifact production, 67, 71; defense of, final, 70; defensibility of, 66; destruction at, 84, 342; Dos Pilas / Aguateca dynasty, 52, 79, 82; dynastic changes, 52; dynastic collapse, 70, 83; elites, 67, 70–71; fall of, 52–54, 57, 70–71, 83, 153; household object recoveries, 71; object assemblages, 67; Stela 2, 82, 146*f*; Structure M8-4, 71; Tahn Te' Ki'inich, 52, 66, 70; Teotihuacan military iconography, 146*f*; termination ritual, 345; warfare, 52–53, 66, 70–71, 83, 354–55; weaponry, 67, 70–71, 80; women in weapon production, 71
Aguateca Archaeological Project, 66–67
Ahau Can Mai priests, 296
Ah Kin Mai priests, 296
Aimers, James, 332
Ajaw titles, 135
Ake, 62
Altar, 341–42
Altar de Los Reyes, 42–44
Altar de Sacrificios, 52, 123
Architecture: contextual analyses of, 177; courtly, 147–49; Early Puuc Civic Complexes, 252–56, 267n6; functional analysis of, 176; institutional, 149; and military activity, 147; Nakum, 202, 211–13; palatial, 169–71, 184; and political regimes, 169; *popal nah,* 256, 257*f*; public, 169; royal, 149; and ruler-elite relationships, 147–49; stylistic spreading, 212; triadic arrangements, 260–61. *See also* Palatial complexes
Arnauld, Charlotte, 5–6, 179, 182, 255
Arroyo de Piedra, 342, 345
Aspergillums, 296, 297*f,* 298, 299*f*
Awe, Jaime J., 106
Baking Pot: abandonment of, 115; artifact recoveries, 124; centers interacting with, 107–8; occupational gaps, 219; peri-abandonment deposit, 123–24, 130; political disintegration, 58; Terminal Classic dating, 60. *See also* Komkom Vase
Ballcourts: Caracol, 214, 225–26, 239*f,* 241; Dzibilchaltun, 258; Ek Balam, 258, 267n9; Ichmul's lack of, 259; Naachtun, 89; Nakum, 212; El Palmar, 188; and *popol nahs,* 258; Uxmal, 255. *See also* Chichen Itza, Great Ballcourt
Ballgames, 259
Barrientos, Tomás, 139
Barrios, María Berta, 214
Batabilobs, 311–12
Bat dynasty: at Calakmul, 89, 99, 101; emblem glyphs, 91–92, 99; at Uxul, 90–92, 95, 99. *See also* Naachtun and the Bat dynasty
Baudez, Claude-François, 298
Becan, 59, 150
Becquelin, Pierre, 254
Belize, 59, 102, 109, 135, 293. *See also* Caracol
Belize River valley, 59–60
Benavides, Antonio, 256
Bey, George III, 292
Bioarchaeology, 152–53, 164. *See also* Copán, bioarchaeological analysis of
Bishop, Ronald, 95
Blanton, Richard, 10
Bloodletting, 307–8
Blue Creek, 339, 345
Bonampak, 38, 57
Book overview, 6–7
Boone, Elizabeth Hill, 300
Bove, Frederick, 108
Brasdefer, Fernando Cortés de, 193
Breitenbach, Sebastian F. M., 62
Breton, Adela, 274
Brisch, Nicole, 17
Bureaucracy, 135, 141, 185, 268n13, 310

Calakmul: abandonment of, 65; Bat dynasty in, 89, 99, 101; Bolon K'awiil II, 101; and Copán, 199; decline of, 199; dynastic expansion, 138; elites, 187; expansion of, 150; grave goods recovered, 93; iconography, 101; and the Kaanul dynasty, 37, 92; king's name at El Palmar, 197; last monument, 61; monument destruction, 229; monument erection hiatus, 58; and Naachtun, 89, 101; palaces, 170; and El Palmar, 192, 199; population declines, 58; recovery attempts, 61; and regional politics, 3; Snake kingdom, 188; state military monopoly, 145; stelae, 89, 94; Suutz dynasty in, 104; Tikal's defeat of, 37, 145, 199; Tomb 4, 200; Yknoom Took' K'awiil, 199; Yuhkno'm Ch'een II, 92; Yuknoom Yich'aak K'ahk', 199
Calderón, Zoila, 217
Campeche, 42–44, 102
Cancuen: abandonment of, 182; Altar 2, 142; architecture, royal, 149; chronology, 175*t*; Dos Pilas alliance, 173; economics of, 139, 180, 336–37; elites, 139, 180, 183, 184, 187; fall of, 57, 182, 353; founding of, 173; hieroglyphic stairway, 174; immigration to, 180; K'an Maax, 57; location of, 171, 173; as multiregional port, 184; Panel 3, 142; political regimes of, 169; projects, 341; regional control, 180; Tajal Chan Ahk's reign, 174, 176, 178–80, 183–84; termination ritual, 344–45; warfare iconography, 142
Cancuen palatial complex: overview of, 173; activities at, 177; architecture-history connections, 184; chronology of, 173–76; destruction of, 353; elites and, 139, 180, 184; excavation of, 173; long houses at, 179–80, 183–84; map of, 172*f*; modifications to, 179–80; monumentality of, 173; passage-gateway structures, 171, 179; reconstructions, 174*f*; residences, 178; size of, 173, 177–78; spatial analysis of, 176–79
The Canul, 320
Caobal, 81
Captain Sun Disk: and El Castillo, 275–77; depictions of, alive, 272*f,* 275*f,* 277–79, 282; depictions of, deceased, 277–79; features associated with, 277; historical sequencing, 276*t*; and Kak u Pakal, 277; and K'uk'ulkan (original), 278–79, 282; and K'uk'ulkan (serpent with spines), 286; and Quetzalcoatl cult, 279, 290; and Temple of the Jaguars, 275–77
Caracol: abandonment, 62, 233–34, 237–38; Acropolis, 226–28, 237; agricultural terrace system, 335*f,* 339; altars, 40*f,* 41*f,* 238, 240*f,* 241, 242*f,* 243*f,* 296; apogee of, 343; architecture, royal, 149; artifacts recovered, 233–34, 235*f,* 236*f,* 237–38; ballcourts, 214, 225–26, 239*f,* 241; burials and tombs, 225–29, 233–34; caches, 309; ceramics, 230, 233–34, 235*f,* 236*f,* 237; and the collapse, 7, 224; cremation recovered, 227; decline, 224; diplomacy, 41; divine kingship reassertion, 225, 241, 244–45; dynastic line, 225; economy of, 230, 339; elites, 187, 230, 234, 237, 244; emblem glyphs, 226, 234, 238; exchange systems, 237; expansion of, 150, 224; founder of, 226; governance during, 225, 238; hieroglyphic band, 265; historical sources from, 111; iconography changes, 238, 241; K'ahk' Ujol K'inich II (Smoke Skull), 229; K'an II, 228–29; K'inich Joy K'awil, 241; last dates at, 61, 351; Naranjo, wars with, 229; palaces, 170, 225, 230, 233–34, 237; political inscriptions, 238; prosperous periods, 244, 343; rebuilding, 230, 233–34, 237; record hiatus, 36, 229–30; and regional politics, 3; revitalization, 343–44; ritual censers, 236*f,* 237; rulers, 227–28; rulership, Classic, 225–30; rulership, Terminal Classic, 230, 231*t,* 233, 238; rulership changes, 225–26, 228, 230, 233–34, 244; state military monopoly, 145; structures (A group), 227–28, 237–38; structures (B group), 230, 233–34, 237–38; summary of, 231*t*; Te' K'ab Chak, 226–27; termination ritual, 345; textual record cessation, 114; tomb removals, 227–28; unburied bodies, 234, 238; Yajaw Te, 228; Yajaw Te' K'inich II, 226, 228–29
Caracol, divine kingship at: burials, 224; discontinuities in, 225; end of, 244, 310; impacts of, 356; reassertion attempts, 225, 241, 244–45, 344, 353; removal of rulers, 224
Caracol, warfare: intensification of, 145; narratives of, 39; records of, 230; and site abandonment, 238; star-war events, 224, 229–30, 234, 244; against Tikal, 224, 310
Caracol monuments: bound prisoner iconography, 230, 241; displacements, 214; eighth-cycle, 227; hiatuses, 36, 229–30, 244; iconographic changes, 238, 241; last, 61; paired figures on, 241; rulers mentioned on, 227; stelae, 226–27, 239*f,* 240*f,* 241, 242*f,* 244; Terminal Classic activities, 58; vision serpent, 225
Cárdenas, Maldonado, 256, 258
Causality, 229–31, 334

Ceibal: overview of, 78; abandonments of, 51, 55, 79; Ajaw Bot, 52–53, 55, 79; chronology, 79; construction activities, 79, 342; demographics, 79; destruction at, 82, 85; and Dos Pilas / Aguateca dynasty, 52, 79; dynastic collapse, 84; dynastic revival, 61; excavations, 78–80; fall of, 342; Harvard projects at, 78–80, 341; inscriptions, 55; K'an Mo' Bahlam, 79; monument erections, 58, 79; obsidian points, 80–81; palaces, 52–53, 55; points recovered, 80–82; political collapses, 79, 82, 84; political disruptions, 51–52, 55, 79; political reorganization attempts, 140; population declines, 79; and regional collapse, 342; revival, 55, 79, 333; shell ornaments, 80; stelae, 79, 297; Structure A-2, 81; structure groups, 78; Wat'ul K'atel, 55; weaponry, 80; Yich'aak Bahlam, 79, 82
Ceibal, warfare: decline, as causing, 79, 354–55; and dynastic collapse, 84; elite resident involvement, 83; intensification of, 82; raids in, 39; rulers captured in, 79, 82
Ceramic chronologies, 332–33, 341–42
Ceramics: Caracol, 230, 233–34, 235*f,* 236*f,* 237; Dzibilchaltun, 258; Naachtun, 95; Nakum, 219; Postclassic, 59; El Señor del Peten vessel, 193–95, 197; Terminal Classic, 52, 59–60, 204, 334; warfare depictions, 355. *See also* Komkom Vase
Ceremonial bars, 241
Cerro de las Mesas, 74–77
Chacchob, 62
Chacchoben, 192
Chase, Arlen, 10, 62, 84, 170
Chase, Diane, 10, 62, 84, 170
Chenes doorways, 261
Chicanna, 261
Chichen Itza: architecture, 147, 149; captives, depictions of, 284, 289; Causeway 3, 283; Cumtun, 283; dating of, 293–95; dynastic sequences at, 267n1; emergence of, 7, 60; enthronization ceremony depictions, 282–83, 289; ethnohistory of, 293–95; fall of, 266; growth of, 62; hieroglyphic texts, 273; iconography, 274–75, 284–85, 289, 298; investiture ceremonies, 298; *k'uhul ajaw* epithet at, 265; location of, 271*f*; and Mexico, 293; and migration, 352; military activity and architecture, 147; Monjas compound, 270–71, 273; New Chichen, 273; palace, 273; political structure, 298; and political unification, 293; Red House, 271; sacrificial scenes, 284–85; seaports controlled by, 287–89; settlements controlled by, 289–90; stelae, 270–71; transformations at, 270
Chichen Itza, Great Ballcourt: construction of, 276*t,* 278, 283; and K'uk'ulkan, 273, 282; maps of, 275*f,* 281*f*; names at, 251; North Temple, 274, 276, 278, 282–83; orientation of, 258; rulers associated with, 251, 276*t,* 282; South Temple, 278, 283
Chichen Itza, Great Terrace: El Castillo, 275–77, 279; construction sequence, 276, 278, 285–86; maps of, 275*f,* 280*f*; El Mercado, 283–86; stratigraphic analyses, 285–86; Structure 3D4, 277, 283–86; Temple of Chac Mool, 286; Temple of the Warriors, 283–86
Chichen Itza, supreme rulers of: *ajaw* prefix, 271, 273, 289; continuity across, 290; historical sequence of, 276*t*; Kak u Pakal, 270–71, 273, 277; and Quetzalcoatl cult, 273–75, 279, 287, 289; representational changes, 273; representations of, 270, 272*f*; structural associations, 275–76. *See also* Captain Sun Disk; K'uk'ulkan, original; K'uk'ulkan rulers
Chichen Itza, Temple of the Jaguars: Captain Sun Disk, 275–77; construction of, 279; foundation of, 278; murals, 279, 289; serpent iconography, 279; and Temple of the Warriors, 286–87
Chunchucmil, 62
Chunhuhub, 62
Cities in sociopolitical systems, 168
City sectors, 153
Clark, John, 161–62
Clastres, Pierre, 11
Coba, 60, 72, 346
Cobos, Rafael, 62, 298
Cogwill, George, 8, 328–29
Collapse, Mayan: overview of, 1, 269–70; and community economic networks, 334–39; contemporary transformations, 270; data on, 2; definition debates, 328–29; demographic, 5, 15, 35; and economic practices, 16; ethnohistory of, 293–98; explanations for, 35–36; interpretations of, 331–33; as mystery, 327–28; northern *versus* southern lowlands, 291; occupations following, 346; political, 15, 35; and political hierarchies, 139–40; as process, 334, 349–51; and Quetzalcoatl cult, 292; regional differences, 353; sequence of, 15, 35, 134; small events, 36; as transformation, 269–70; Triangle Park area, 202; understanding, impediments to, 328; understandings of, changes in, 349–50; urban desertion, 5, 15, 35. *See also* Lowlands, southern, collapse in

Collapse, Mayan, causes of: climate change, 1–2, 35–36, 354; divine kingship end, 35; drought, 1–2, 5, 8, 35, 354; droughts causing, 2, 5, 8, 35, 354; hypercoherence, 337–39, 345; Mexican invaders, 293; as multiple, 329–30, 350, 354; social stressors, 292–93; war, 37, 77–78, 83–84, 354–55
Collapse, Mayan political: overviews of, 2, 7, 36, 51–52, 62–63; Aguateca's fall, 53–55; Ajaw Bot's reign end, 55; causes, 62–63; contemporary awareness of, 40–41; continuity in the north, 60; cross-region synchronicity, 51; demographic trends, 58–60; diplomacy preceding, 40–44, 50; dynastic collapses, 57–58; economic factors, 139; environmental factors, 5; first wave, 53*f,* 55, 343; and kingship, 8; military conflicts, 57; and monumental activities, 57–58; and monument erections, 8; northern *versus* southern lowlands, 63; Pasión region, 55, 62–63; recovery attempts, 61, 63; regional-local variability, 5; as rupture, 3, 5; second wave, 53–55, 57–58, 63, 84, 343; sequencing of, 15, 35; southern lowlands, 57–58; southern regimes, 134; speed of, 50; structural mechanisms enabling, 137–39; third wave, 55, 56*f,* 61–62, 84, 343; and warfare, 84; warfare's role in, 83; waves, differences among, 343. *See also* Dynastic collapse and rupture
Collapses: definition of, 328–29; features of, 346–47; and networks, 329; as processes, 329–31
Colonial documents: on commoners' representatives, 319; on Ek Balam, 314, 317; on *halach uinics,* 319–20; informants' interests, 311, 316–17; legitimation discourse in, 311, 316–17; on Mayapan, 314–17; Maya rulers origins, 311; on Motul, 313, 315–17
Comalcalco palace, 148*f*
Commoners: importance of, 317; lords, work for, 320; mobility of, 323; and moral ethics, 312; political agency of, 315–17, 321–23; political representatives, 312, 319; ruler dependence on, 352; tributes paid, 315, 318, 320; uprisings of, 314–16, 322
Community networks, economic, 334–39, 344, 347–48
Conjunctive approaches, 15
Cook, Garrett, 10
Copán: abandonment of, 58; Acropolis, 76–77; and Calakmul, 199; collapse of, 153; construction hiatuses, 36; destruction at, 77, 84; diplomacy, 41; divine kingship at, 164; dynastic collapse at, 58, 76, 78, 83–84; dynastic period, 164–65; early rulers, 227; Group 10L-17, 76; hieroglyphic stairway, 77; households, 165; K'inich Yax K'uk' Mo', 73–75, 164–65; location of, 72; maps of, 155*f*; migration to, 161, 163; mosaic facade stone structures, 77; occupation of, 72; political changes at, 72–74; Postclassic occupation, 59; the Principal Group, 74, 76–77; residential clusters, 154, 156; sex-based divisions, 161–62; social changes at, 72; and Teotihuacan, 249; termination ritual, 345; warfare at, 77–78, 83; Waxaklajuun Ubaah K'awiil, 76, 196–97; weaponry, 72–78; Yax K'uk Mo, 227; Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, 41, 77
Copán, bioarchaeological analysis of: archaeological variables, 154, 156–58; biographical reconstructions, 158–62; bone morphology, 158–59, 162*t,* 163*t*; burial samples, 154, 155*f,* 156*f,* 160–62, 165; dental caries, 160*t*; food consumption, 158, 161; food production, 164; funerary traditions, 157–58, 161, 163; households, 156–59, 161–65; labor division, 161, 162*t*; Late Classic interpretations, 162–64; migratory relations, 158, 161, 163; premises of, 153–54; residential clusters, 156–58; sex-based divisions, 161–62, 164; stature, 160*t*; status scores, 157–59
Copán Valley, 74–78
Copul, 296
La Corona, 42, 58, 92–93, 118, 345–46
Cosmology, Mayan-Mexican integration, 300
Courtly architecture, 147–49
Creation myths, 304, 307
Cremations, 302
Cuca, 62
Culbert, Patrick, 188

Defensive potential and settlement, 221
Deities, Mexican, 300
Demarest, Arthur, 8, 10, 14, 137, 161
Destruction rituals, 342
Diamanti, Melissa, 160–62
Díaz de Alpuche, Giraldo, 319
Diplomacy, pre-collapse, 40–44, 50
Diversity, 353
Divine kingship: overviews of, 21, 26, 133; as accepted paradigm, 26–27; and action, capacity for, 9–10; agency of, 14; as anomaly, 309; authority of, 320–21; and bloodletting, 308; and bureaucracy, 310; changes in, northern, 150; collapse of, 84, 183, 291; continuity of, 31; declines in, 61, 86; as description *versus* model, 27–28; documentation of, 309; and emblem glyphs, 135–36; establishing,

difficulties of, 226; ethnohistory of, 297–98; evidence for, 26; galactic polity model, 26; governance pragmatics, 3, 5; hierarchical positioning of, 135–36; microcosm system, 309; name for, 21; and political agency, 11; and political economy, 12; and power, 27–28; and rituals, 16, 26, 136; royal armies, 142, 144–45; and sacrifice, 12, 16, 142, 143*f*; sumptuary laws, 136; warfare, conducting, 12, 145, 147; and war gods, 142. *See also* Caracol, divine kingship at
Divine kingship, end of: Caracol, 244, 310; as collapse cause, 35; dating of, 310; evidence for, 291–92, 297–98, 310; reasons for, 292; warfare causing, 65, 84, 309–10, 355
Divine kingship models and theories: overview of, 22; adverse sacralization, 30; anthropological, 21, 25; contemporary views of, 28–30; criticisms of, 25; cultural-historical connections, 25; divine *versus* sacred debate, 24, 226; economy-ideology relationships, 25; function debate, 24–25; geographic differences, 31; historicity in, 25, 29, 31; Marxist, 25; in Maya studies generally, 21–22; power, 22–25, 28–30; royal regicide, 24; and social relations, 23; structuralist, 24, 26–27, 30; term meanings, 21. *See also* Scapegoat theory; Stranger kings
Divining figures, 304
Dos Hombres, 345
Dos Pilas: abandonment of, 52, 350; Cancuen alliance, 173; destruction of, 174; destruction rituals, 342; fall of, 66, 79, 214, 351; last hieroglyphs, 351; Panel 19, 214; squatter's village, 352; state military monopoly, 145; termination ritual, 345; vessel gifting, 123
Dos Pilas / Aguateca dynasty, 52, 79, 82
Dos Pilas dynasty, 52, 79, 136, 138
Dresden Codex, 300
Droughts: as collapse cause, 2, 5, 8, 35, 354; data on, 354; and divine kingship, 8; impact of, 15, 134; severe, 63
Duality of societies, 22
Dumézil, Georges, 23
Dynastic collapse and rupture: Aguateca, 52, 70, 83; Ceibal, 84; Copán, 58, 76, 78, 83–84; external causes, 315; internal causes, 315, 321; lowlands, 57–58, 150, 342–43, 346; Motul, 313, 315; Naachtun, 99, 101; Palenque, 57; Pasión River valley, 341–42; Piedras Negras, 57; Tonina, 57; and uprisings, 322; war causing, 37, 70, 83; Yaxchilan, 57
Dzibilchaltun: architecture, institutional, 149; ballcourt, 258; ceramics, 258; *kalo'mte*'s, 258–59, 267n11; *k'uhul ajaw* epithet at, 265; long houses, 182; *popal nah* architecture, 256, 257*f*; stelae, 258, 267n10; stranger-kings at, 258–59; Structure 44, 148*f*; Uk'uw Kan Chaak, 258; writing, introduction of, 258
Dzonot Ake, 62

Early Puuc Civic Complexes (EPCC), 252–56, 267n6
Ebert, Claire, 108
Economies: breakaway networks, 336–37; community networks, 334–39; global, 355–56; horizontal integration, 338; interdependence among, 355–56; trading networks, 102
El Edén, 82
Edzna: architecture, institutional, 149; ballcourt, 258; dynastic sequences at, 267n1; long houses, 182; monument erection hiatus, 58; monument erections, late, 61; the Noh'och'na, 148*f,* 256, 258; political innovation, 150; *popal nah* architecture, 256, 257*f*
Ek Balam (person), 250–51, 314
Ek Balam (place): acropolis, 260–61, 263*f*; architecture, institutional, 149; ballcourts, 258, 267n9; Chak Jutuuw Chan Ek, 251; colonial documents on, 314–15, 317; commoner uprisings, 314–16; Cupul kingship legitimation, 314, 317; decline of, 62; defensive features, 62; demographics, 251–52; dynastic sequences at, 267n1; excavations of, 256; founding of, 250; funerary complex, 260–61; growth of, 60; growth periods, 251; He Blai Chac, 314; He Blai Chak, 250–51; House of the Fish, 261; investiture at, 259; *kalo'mte*'s, 258–59, 267n11; *k'uhul ajaw* epithet at, 265; long houses, 182; monument dating, 251–52; palace, 264; Panel of 96 Glyphs, 251; *popol nahs,* 256; Stela 1, 258–59, 282–83; stranger-kings at, 250–52; triadic arrangements, 260–61; Ukit Kan Le'k, 60, 251–52, 258, 260–61, 267nn4–5; writing, introduction of, 258
Eliade, Mircea, 23
Elias, Norbert, 141–42, 147, 149
Elites: Aguateca, 67, 70–71; Cancuen, 139, 180, 183, 184, 187; Caracol, 187, 230, 234, 237, 244; Ceibal, 83; and the collapse, 295–96; commoners, dependence on, 323; courtly scene depictions, 185–86; distribution of, 187; empowered, consequences of, 266; ethnohistories of, 295–96; houses of, 259; interpretive debates, 185; legitimizing narratives, 312; merchants, 339; Mexican origins, 295; Naachtun, 92–93, 96, 102–3; Nakum, 202, 217, 219; Naranjo, 215; El Palmar, 186, 193,

Elites—*continued*
195–97, 199–200; power of, 150; *principales,* 301–2; proliferation of, 136–37; representations of, 217; Spanish contact, 295; status proclamations, 139; studies of, 186; taming of, 141–42, 145, 147–49; in termination rituals, 344; visibility of, 187; warfare and power, 140, 147, 150; warfare involvement, 83–84; weaponry production, 67
Elite titles: *ajk'uhuun,* 77, 135, 185, 187, 193, 195, 199; distribution of, 187; *lakam,* 185–86, 196–97; at El Palmar, 186, 193, 195–97, 199–200; proliferation of, 185; *sajal,* 185, 187
Emblem glyphs: artists' signatures, 135; Bat dynasty, 91–92, 99; at Caracol, 226, 234; and *k'uhul ajaw* epithet, 265; new, 264–65; northern lowlands, 135–36; and political positions, 135
Erasmus, Charles, 295

Fash, Barbara, 74, 77
Fash, William, 74
La Felicidad, 82
Fialko, Vilma, 214
Final date methodology, 108–9, 351
Fox, John, 10
Frazer, James, 17, 22–23
Funerary internment, 157
Funerary treatment models, 157

Galactic polity model, 21, 26–27
Gallareta, Tomás, 260, 292
Gann, Thomas, 308
García, Pedro, 320
García Barrios, Ana, 101
Geertz, Clifford, 11
Gender, 70–71, 161–62, 265, 268n15
Geopolitics, Classic, 3, 5, 11
Gerstle, Andrea, 162
Globalization, 355–56
Godelier, Maurice, 11
Graeber, David, 6, 11, 14–15, 29–30
Graham, Elizabeth, 292–93
Grube, Nikolai: Bat emblem glyph, 90–91, 94; on Caracol rulers, 228; on divine kingship, 136; Ek Balam interpretations, 261; kingdom hierarchy, 3; *k'uhul* sign studies, 192
Guenter, Stanley, 109
Gutierrez Picon, Juan, 314

Halach uinics: colonial accounts of, 319–20; commoners, relationship to, 319; and councils, 319–21; divine aspects, 320–21; Francisco de Montejo Xiu, 316, 319–20; of Mayapan, 316; role of, 296; of Tutul Xio, 295–96
Harvard projects, 78–80, 341
Hendon, Julia, 162
Hermes, Bernard, 60
Hershey, 123, 345
Hierarchized societies, 11
Hieroglyphic record, 351–52
Hieroglyphic stairways: Cancuen, 174; Copán, 77; La Corona, 118, 346; Naachtun, 92; Naranjo, 269; Oxkintok, 267n11; El Palmar, 118, 190, 195–96, 198*f*; Yaxchilan, 38, 118
High priests, 296
Hill, Rebecca, 255
Hitchcock, Louise, 177
Hocart, Arthur, 11, 17, 23
Hochob, 261, 263*f*
Hoggarth, Julie, 62
Hoggarth, Julie A., 106
Houk, Brett, 9
Households: abandonment of, 323; definition of, 153; elite, 67, 70, 76, 78; and funerary internment, 156; and inhabitant political attributes, 153–54; relationships within, 160–61; residential clusters, 154; as social foundations, 154; variance in, 160
Houston, Stephen, 8, 55, 159–62, 267n4
Huntichmul, 261, 264

Iannone, Gyles, 9, 14, 27
Icaiché, 192–95, 197
Ichmul de Morley, 259
Iconography: Aguateca, 146*f*; Calakmul, 101; Cancuen, 142; captives, 210, 230, 241; Caracol, 230, 238, 241; Chichen Itza, 274–75, 279, 284–85, 289, 298; K'uk'ulkan ruler use of, 274; Mayapan, 298–300; Naachtun, 101; Piedras Negras, 146*f*; Santa Rita Corozal, 304; serpent, 279; Teotihuacan military, 144*f,* 146*f*; warfare, 142; warrior, 274–75, 284
Inomata, Takeshi, 159–62, 333, 342
Institutions, 134, 147, 149–50, 168
Investiture, 259
Itza people, 219, 352
Ixkun, 58
Ixlu, 45, 61, 108, 111*t,* 129*t,* 351
Ixtonton, 345
Ixtutz, 42

Jade Sky, 41
Jimbal, 45, 50n1, 61, 108
Jobbová, Eva, 108
Johnston, Kevin, 70

Jones, Grant, 219
La Joyanca, 136, 137*f*

Kaanul dynasty: in Calakmul, 37; and La Corona, 92–93; decline of, 94–95, 102–3, 183; and Naachtun, 92–96, 100–1; political influence decline, 102–3; rise of, 90; royal title use, 168; sites controlled by, 92; splitting of, 37, 50; Tikal's defeat of, 94
Kalo'mte' title: Bat emblem glyph, 90, 99; conferral of, 252, 258, 267n11; *elk'in* variant, 215; *and k'uhul ajaw* epithet, 265; meaning variations, 266; rank of, 14, 251; and stranger-kings, 264
Kamci cah rulership, 317–18, 321–22
Kaminaljuyu, 249
Kaqchikel Maya, 249
K'iche' Maya, 249
Kingdom hierarchy, 3
Kings, Aztec, 10
Kingship, Classic: agency theoretical framework, 15; agricultural basis of, 138; balkanization of power, 185; bloodletting, 307; changes in, 84, 133, 185, 349–50; and the collapse, 8–9; comparative studies of, 17; control, loss of, 137; definitions of, 2–3; depictions of, 200; dynamic-static dichotomies, 10; end of, 351; exclusionary *versus* corporate framework, 10; geopolitical contexts, 3; hierarchical positioning of, 135; material culture studies, 9; materialist dimensions, 12; pathways to, 186–87; and political organization, 10; the royal trinity, 16; ruptures in, 44–48, 50; seats of power, 12; segmentary *versus* centralized framework, 10; studies of, 2–3; titles, 11–12, 185. *See also* Divine kingship; *halach uinic*s
Kingship, northern Yucatan, 249–51, 266, 267n1
"King," words for, 12–14
Kinship societies, 11
Kiuic, 62, 254–55, 264
Kokom, 265
Komkom, 117
Komkom Vase: overviews of, 106, 115, 117; calendrical themes, 119, 121; as codical annal copy, 118–19; damage and repair, 123–24; detail, 118; discovery context, 123; disposal of, 124; drawings and photographs of, 116*f,* 120*f*; event summary, 118*t*; gifting of, 123; historical contexts of, 115, 117; kings, deeds of, 119–21; *versus* monumental record, 121–23; Naranjo in, 119–20; Naranjo stelae matches, 119–21; owner of, 117; production of, 115, 117, 121, 123; recovery of, 106; significance of, 107; text of, 106–7, 118; uniqueness of, 117, 119; uses of, 123–24; warfare in, 119, 121–22
Kowoj Maya, 219–20
Kristan-Graham, Cynthia, 286, 295
K'uhul ajaw epithet, 168, 264–65, 268n15. *See also* Divine kingship
K'uhul signs, 192
K'uk'ulkan, original (feathered serpent): ancestors, possible, 286–87; and Captain Sun Disk, 278–79, 282; and the Great Ballcourt, 282; historical sequence, 276*t*; and New Chichen, 273; reign of, 270–71, 276*t,* 289; representations of, 271–73, 279, 282; and Temple of the Jaguars, 279
K'uk'ulkan rulers: and *ajaw* term, 274; ancestry of, 278, 286, 289; construction projects, 283, 285; depictions of, 274–75, 289; feathered serpent with large spines, 272*f,* 276*t,* 283–88; featherless serpent with thick hooks, 272*f,* 276*t,* 282–83; iconography, use of, 274; political ideology, 274–75; and Quetzalcoatl cult, 273–74, 287, 289–90; and sacrifice, 285; and Temple of the Warriors, 283–85, 287; term significance, 289; and warfare, 287, 290; as warriors, 274–75, 283–84, 289
K'ul ah k'ak title, 265
Kumal-Yalcoba, 256, 257*f*
Kvamme, Kenneth, 108

Labna: ballplayer panels, 259; collapse evidence, 62; EPCCs, 254–55; palace, 254, 260, 262*f,* 264; stepped pyramids, 254; triadic arrangements, 260
Lacadena García-Gallo, Alfonso, 251–52, 261, 268nn12–13
Lakam glyphic blocks, 196
Landa, Diego de, 274, 295, 314–15
Last date methodology, 108–9, 351
Late Classic period: balkanization of power, 185; end of, 86; Naachtun, 90–94; polychrome vases, 140; population increases, 187; settlement patterns, 75; warfare intensification, 145, 147; war references, 113–14
Latsanopoulos, Nicolas, 298
LeCount, Lisa, 60
Leiden plaque, 142
Lincoln, Charles, 277
La Linterna, 345
Lizana, Bernardo de, 250
Long Count notational system, 138–39
Long houses, 179–80, 182–84, 352–53
Long-lipped wind deities, 212, 222
López Cogolludo, Diego, 250

Lowlands: central, 167, 183; eastern *versus* western, 353; map of, 271*f*; and Mexico, 293, 295
Lowlands, eastern central: calendrical celebrations, 111–12, 114, 122–23; dated events tabulation, 125–29*t*; definition of, 107–10; historical span, 110–11; homogeneity of, 109; kings, 114–15, 122–23; map of, 109*f*; monuments, 110*f*; texts, 110–15, 121–23; warfare, 112–14, 122–23. *See also* Baking Pot
Lowlands, northern: architecture, institutional, 147–49; architecture and military activity, 147; continuity in, 182; elites, taming of, 142; emblem glyphs, 135–36; political disruptions, 62–63; political institution variations, 167; population declines, 62; *versus* southern, 352–53; texts from, 49
Lowlands, southern: agricultural overproduction, 339; architecture, institutional, 147–49; architecture and military activity, 147; autoreferential inscriptions, 49; civilizational peak, 337; as community network, 334–39, 347–48; dynastic collapse, 150, 342–43, 346; economic horizontal integration, 338; Elevated Interior Region, 337; elites, taming of, 142; hypercoherence of, 337–39, 345; infrastructure, 337–39; maps of, 4*f*; *versus* northern, 352–53; political change, 3, 5, 7, 139–40; political connections, 139–40; political disruptions, 63; political economy of, 139; political entities, 3, 134; population declines, 58–59; status rivalry, 337–38; trading networks, 102, 334–38; wars, 39
Lowlands, southern, collapse in: overview of, 347; ceramic assemblages, 342; ceramic chronology evidence, 341–42; chronology of, 342–43; dynastic, 342–43, 346; enabling factors, 334–39; Greater Pasión Valley, 341; as network failure, 343–44, 347–48; Pasión River valley, 341–42; Petexbatun political network, 342; political, 134; prior research, 341; research frameworks, 340; termination rituals, 344–45; and warfare, 341; waves of, 340, 342–43
Lubaantun, 58
Lucero, Lisa, 14

Machaquila, 61, 296, 297*f*
Mani, 319
Manos Rojas, 261
Martin, Simon, 3, 228
Maya codices, 300
Mayapan: burials, 302; Cocom, 314, 316–17; colonial documents on, 314–17; councils, 266; Cuculcan, 314; fall of, 296; iconography, 298–300; last *halach uinic,* 316; palaces, 292, 301; and political unification, 293; Stela 9, 299*f*; uprisings, 314–17; Xiu rulers, 314, 316–17
McAnany, Patricia, 3, 10
Mektan cah rulership, 317–18, 321–22
Metapersonal power, 29–30
Michelet, Dominique, 254
Middle class citizens, 264
Miller, Arthur G., 279
Minanha, 58
Miters, 297, 307–8
Mixteca-Puebla style graffiti, 220
Montejo Xiu, Francisco de, 316, 319–20
Monument erection hiatuses, 36, 58, 214, 229–30, 244
Monuments: Ceibal, 58, 79; cessations of, 37, 52, 57–58, 61, 350–51; displacements of, 214; distribution of, 8; Edzna, 61; final, 61; Jimbal, 61; La Joyanca, 136; Machaquila, 61; methodological considerations, 333; La Muñeca, 61; Naachtun, 96, 99; Nadzcaan, 61; and northern Yucatan kingship, 249; El Peru, 61; and political collapse, 8; and political hierarchies, 135–36, 135–37; Postclassic, 292; Tamarindito dynasty, 52; Terminal Classic, 39, 49; war representations, 39; Zapote Bobal, 136. *See also* Caracol monuments; Nakum monuments; Stelae
Moral-ethical principles, 312, 315–16, 321
Morley, Sylvanus, 8
Morris, Ann Axtell, 284–85
Motul, 313, 315
Motul de San José, 58, 61, 123, 187
Müller, Florencia, 94
Muna, 62
La Muñeca, 61, 109
Mutal dynasty, 50

Naachtun: abandonment, 96, 104; architecture, royal, 149; and Calakmul, 101; ceramics, 95; chronology, 87, 89, 95; codex-style sherds, 93; construction cessation, 97, 99; decline, 90, 99; demographics, 89–90, 93–94, 97–99, 103–4; dynastic split, 99, 101; East Plaza, Group B, 90, 93, 95; economy, 102–3; elites, 92–93, 96, 102–3; funerary contexts, 95; hieroglyphic staircase absence, 92; hieroglyphic stairway, 92; iconography, 101; inscriptions, 92, 101–2; and the Kaanul dynasty, 92–96, 100–1; kingship system changes, 86–87; Late Classic period, 90–94; maps of, 88*f,* 91*f,* 98*f*; material culture, 93; monument destruction, 92–93; monument erections, 96,

99; noble families ruling, 102–3; prosperity without divine kingship, 356; as regional power, 89; residential area, 96–97; residential compounds, 96; Río Bec Plaza, 95–97, 101–2; rulers, 87, 89, 102; sherds, 96; South Complex, Group B, 103; stelae, 87, 91–92, 96, 99–101; Suutz' dynasty, 89, 92, 94, 96, 101, 104; and Teotihuacán, 89–90; and Tikal, 89–90, 95; transformative phases, 87, 97–99, 101–3; and Uxul, 90–92; Walled Complex, Group A, 101–2; warrior queen depictions, 72; West Complex, Group B, 90, 93, 95, 102
Naachtun and the Bat dynasty: in Calakmul, 89, 99; emblem glyphs, 91–92, 99; installation of, 87; last mentions of, 100*f*; split in, 99, 101; and Uxul, 91–93, 95, 99
Nadzcaan, 61
Naj Tunich cave, 192
Nakamura, Seiichi, 154
Nakum: acropolis, 204, 209–10; architectural phases, 211–13; burials, 222; ceramics, 219; Chumuk phase, 204; and the collapse, 220–21; construction, 204, 209–10, 212; dating, 204, 205*t*; defensive potential, 221; elites, 202, 217, 219; foreign deities, 222; growth of, 86, 202; growth periods, 59; internal strife evidence, 222–23; and local power vacuums, 213–14; location of, 202–3, 222; long houses, 180; maps of, 206*f,* 207*f*; North Group complex, 210–11, 216–17, 218*f*; occupation, 209–11, 219–20; occupational gaps, 219; palace, 209–10; plazas, 204; prosperous periods, 202–3, 220–22, 356; Pyramid U, 213, 220; recovery attempts, 61; royal history beginning, 213; sectors of, 204, 206*f,* 207*f*; Structure 12, 212; termination ritual, 222, 345; and Tikal, 213; trade, 221
Nakum monuments: damage to, 222; date commemorations, 215–17; dating, 212; erections of, 213, 215; hieroglyphic bench, 204, 217, 218*f,* 221; Late Classic, 213; royal titles on, 215; Stela 1, 204, 215, 216*f,* 221; Stela 2, 204, 215, 216*f,* 221; Stela 3, 213, 215, 220, 222; Stela 4, 213; Stela 5, 204, 216–17, 218*f,* 221–22; and Terminal Classic dating, 204
Naranjo: Caracol monuments at, 229; Caracol wars, 229; collapse of, 213–14, 221; dates recorded at, 58; diplomacy, 42; elites, 215; hieroglyphic stairway, 269; historical sources from, 111; Itzamnaaj K'awil, 110; and the Kaanul dynasty, 92; king as sacrificer, 143*f*; and Komkom, 117; Lady Six Sky depictions, 72; location of, 203; military reach, 107; monuments, last, 214; peripheral complexes, 214; population declines, 58; sherd production, 96; star-war events, 224, 229–30, 234, 244; state military monopoly, 145; stelae, 117, 119–21, 143*f,* 214–15; vessel gifting, 123; warfare intensification, 145; war narratives from, 38–39; wars against Caracol, 224, 229, 234, 244
Neiman, Frederick, 108
Networks: collapse of regional, 342–44; economic community, 334–39, 344, 347–48; hypercoherence, 338; socio-political structures as, 334
New Archaeology, 157
Nichols, John, 14
Nim Li Punit, 44, 58
Nobles. *See* Elites
Nondédéo, Philippe, 5–6
Nonroyal elites. *See* Elites
Nuun Ujol K'inich, 42

Obsidian tools, green, 74
Okoshi, Tsubasa, 6
Oxkintok, 55, 62, 267n11
Oxpemul, 42, 45, 61, 104

Palatial architecture, 169–71, 184
Palatial complexes: overview of, 169–70; abandonment of, 182; aggregative development of, 170; appearance of, 167, 170; Caracol, 170, 225, 230, 233–34, 237; Chichen Itza, 273; Classic, 169–71; Classic period, end of, 180–83; comparative chart, 181*f*; disappearance of, 183; growth of, 264; Labna, 260, 262*f,* 264; Late Classic, 170; long houses, 179–80, 182–83; Mayapan, 292, 301; modifications to, 180, 182; morphology of, 176–77; Nakum, 209–10, 212; Postclassic, 170; proliferation of, 183; Santa Rita Corozal, 292, 301; socio-political changes reflected by, 182; variations across, 170. *See also* Cancuen palatial complex
Palenque, 57, 92, 350
Pallán, Carlos, 91, 94
El Palmar: overview of, 188; Ajpach' Waal, 196–97, 199; Aj Yax Tohlook, 193; Altar 10, 190–93, 197, 199; and Calakmul, 192, 199; chronology, 188; dates recorded at, 58; demographics, 188; elites, 186, 193, 195–97, 199–200; glyphic blocks, 192–93, 195–96; Guzmán stairway, 186, 195–97, 198*f,* 199; hieroglyphic stairway, 118, 190, 195–96, 198*f*; K'ahk' P'ulaj Chan Yopaat, 192–93, 197; *k'uhul* title, 192, 194; last monument, 61; Main Group, 188, 190, 196; map of, 189*f*; monument erections, 190;

El Palmar—*continued*
plazas, 188, 190, 196; polychrome vessels, 195, 197, 200; power relations, 199–200; royal family, 193–96; royal titles, 190–97, 199–200; and El Señor del Peten vessel, 193–95, 197; and the Snake Kingdom, 192; stelae, 190, 192, 200; Upakal K'inich, 194, 196; Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, 197
Papamalili of Ucanal, 241
Pasión region: collapse in, 343; Harvard projects in, 341; political disruption in, 55, 62–63; settlement abandonment, 52; warfare intensification, 145. *See also* Ceibal
Pasión River valley, 341–42, 345
Pech, Juan, 313
Peri-abandonment deposits, 123–24, 130
Peri-abandonment rituals, 16
El Peru: and the Kaanul dynasty, 92; monument erection hiatus, 58; monument erections, late, 61; population continuity, 59; Princes of Suutz', 101; Stela 32, 101
Peten region: central lakes area, 48, 219; chert bifacial point production, 82; Elevated Interior Region, 337–38; obsidian bifacial point production, 82; political structures, 297–98; Sihyaj K'ahk"s incursion into, 227; Terminal Classic constructions, 59. *See also* Naachtun
Petexbatun region: collapse in, 341–43; political declines, 52; warfare in, 39, 66, 145, 341. *See also* Ceibal
Piedras Negras: architecture, 147, 149; dynastic collapse, 57; king as sacrificer, 143*f*; last monument, 350; palaces at, 170; Panel 2, 146*f*; state military monopoly, 145; stelae, 143*f*; Teotihuacan military iconography, 146*f*; termination ritual, 345; Yaxchilan conflict, 57
Political change: Classic period, 3, 5; and commoners, 315–17, 321–23; and divinity, 297–98; in hierarchies, 137; ruptures, 3, 5
Political economy, 12, 139
Political hierarchies, 135–40
Political power symbols, 296–97
Political structures: and architecture, 169; *batabilob,* 311–12; Chichen Itza, 298; commoners' representatives, 312, 319; confederacies, 296; *cúuchcabalob,* 311, 315–17, 322; hierarchies, 135–40; and institutions, 168; new, 184; Peten region, 297–98; of polities, 311–32; redistribution systems, 320; regional differences, 352–53; representative-ruler councils, 311–12, 318–21. *See also halach uinics*
Political systems, Classic, 186–87. *See also* Kingship, Classic
Popol nahs: and ballcourts, 258; Copán acropolis as, 77; heads of, 260; northern plains, 256–58; Puuc, 253*f,* 254–55
Popol Vuh, 321
Population declines, 58–62, 103–4
Postclassic International Style graffiti, 220
Postclassic period: beginnings of, 7; bloodletting, 308–9; ceramics, 59; cosmology, 300; as dark age, 7; ethnohistory, 293–98; iconography, 298–300; kingship, 350; map of polities, 294*f*; material culture, 350; monumental activities, 138; monument erections, 292; political-religious divide, 296; prosperity of, 7–8; rulers, archaeological studies of, 300–309; settlement systems, 2
Prestige goods theory, 22
Proskouriakoff, Tatiana, 21
Puleston, Dennis, 8
Punta de Chimino, 342, 345
Puuc region: collapse in, 342; Early Puuc Civic Complexes (EPCC), 252–56, 267n6; house symbolism, 259; Huntichmul, 255; Kabah, 255; and last date studies, 109; masonry platform construction, 252; Monjas quadrangle, 255; Oxkintok, 255; political disruption, 55; political power in, 254–55; Xcalumkin, 254–55. *See also* Kiuic; Labna; Uxmal

Quetzalcoatl cult: appearances of, 274; in Chichen Itza, 273–75, 279, 287, 289; and the collapse, 292, 355; and K'uk'ulkan rulers, 273–74, 287, 289–90
Quirigua, 41, 58–59, 76

Radiocarbon dating, 333
Ramos, César Lizardi, 94
Raxruja Viejo, 345
Religious beliefs, foreign, 355
Residential clusters, 157
Rhetorical devices, 331
Rice, Don, 14, 188, 298
Rice, Prudence, 14, 298
Ringle, William, 273, 285–86, 292, 298
Río Azul, 187, 192, 194, 345
Río Bec region, 59, 61–62, 136, 150
Rituals, 16, 23–24, 26, 136, 142. *See also* Termination rituals
Roy, Ralph L., 311
Royal titles: *ajaw,* 135; Classic, 11–12, 185; Kaanul dynasty, 168; *k'ul ah k'ak,* 265; Naj Tunich cave, 192; on Nakum monuments, 215; El Palmar, 190–97, 199–200; and stranger-kings, 197, 265. *See also Kalo'mte'* title

Royal trinity, 16
Roys, Ralph, 293
Rulers: burials, 302; characteristics valued in, 322; commoners, interaction with, 322, 352; heritage stories, 311; houses, 300–2; legitimacy of, 315; legitimizing narratives, 312; limits on, 318–19; and moral ethics, 312, 315–18; obligations of, 315, 317–18, 321; Postclassic, 300–2; secular, 298; as serving polities, 318; in termination rituals, 344. *See also* Captain Sun Disk; Divine kingship; *halach uinics*; Kingship, Classic
Rulership, 317–18, 321–22
Rupture *versus* transformation, 5

Sacrifice, 12, 16, 142, 143*f,* 285
Sahlins, Marshall: metapersonal power, 29–30; political struggle model, 11; on premodern kingship, 6; stranger king concept, 14–15, 23–24, 249, 251
San Bartolo murals, 309
San Clemente long houses, 180
Santa Rita Corozal: burials, 302–4; cache containers, 304, 305*f*; figurines, 304, 306*f,* 307–8; iconography, 304; palaces, 292, 301; *principal* houses, 301*f*; structure 24, 308; structure 213, 304, 306*f,* 307–8; structure 216, 302
Santa Rosa Xtampak, 182
Sayil palace, 264
Scapegoat theory, 9, 22, 27
Schwake, Sonja, 9
Schwartz, Glenn, 14
El Señor del Peten vessel, 193–95, 197
Sharer, Robert, 8
Simmons, Scott, 292–93
Sion, Julien, 102
Smith, Adam, 15
Snake kingdom, 192–93
Sociopolitical models, 168
Sociopolitical structures, 168–69, 184
The Spaniards, 320–23. *See also* Colonial documents
Spanish contact, 295–96
Spatial analysis, 176
Šprajc, Ivan, 193
Star-war events, 38*f,* 224, 229–30, 234, 244
Status markers, 157
Stelae: Aguateca, 82, 146*f*; Calakmul, 89, 94; Caracol, 226–27, 239*f,* 240*f,* 241, 242*f,* 244; Ceibal, 79, 297; Chichen Itza, 270–71; Dzibilchaltun, 258, 267n10; Ek Balam, 258–59, 282–83; Hacienda Xcanchakan, 299*f*; Ixtutz, 42; Jimbal, 61; Mayapan, 299*f*; Naachtun, 87, 91–92, 96, 99–101; Nadzcaan, 61; Naranjo, 117, 119–21, 143*f,* 214–15; El Palmar, 190, 192, 200; El Peru, 101; Piedras Negras, 143*f*; Tikal, 144*f,* 145, 214; Uxmal, 282–83; Uxul, 90–92, 94–95; Wat'ul K'atel, 61. *See also* Nakum monuments
Stranger-kings: overview of, 23; Canul family, 252; danger of, 251; at Dzibilchaltun, 258–59; Ek Balam (person) as, 250–51; as event *versus* structure, 249, 252; impacts of, 136; *kalo'mte'* title, 265; in Maya studies, 14–15, 22, 26; narratives, 264, 266; northern Yucatan, 250–51; as political organization, 23–24; structuralist, 24; titles, 197; violence of, 251; western Yucatan, 252–55; Xiu family, 252
Stuart, David, 8, 113, 136, 138, 268n14
Sumptuary laws, 136
Suzuki, Shintaro, 159
Syil long houses, 182

Tainter, Joseph, 328, 331
Tamarindito, 52, 345
Tambiah, Stanley, 11
Temple of the Jaguars. *See* Chichen Itza, Temple of the Jaguars
Teotihuacán: and Copán, 249; military concepts, 142, 144–45; military iconography, 144*f,* 146*f*; and Naachtun, 89–90; and Tikal, 249
Terminal Classic concept, 333–34, 344
Terminal Classic period: ceramic-based definition of, 204, 334; ceramics of, 52, 59–60; characteristics of, 50; chronological resolution, 333; continuity theory, 346; dating of, 48, 50, 59–60, 334, 349; defensive constructions, 62; definitions of, 48, 50, 52; demographic changes, 86; diplomatic activity, 40–44; droughts, 8; end of, 86; *katun* periods included in, 48, 50; migrations, 49; monuments, 39, 49; occupations, 333; population declines, 59
Terminal Classic period texts: calendrical celebrations, 111–12, 114, 122–23; emphasis on, 84; event history absence, 48–49; historical span, 110–11; kings, 49, 114–15, 122–23; *versus* Komkom vase, 121–23; narratives and reality, 40; parentage statements, 49, 50n1; rhetoric of, 115; ritual emphasis, 49, 115; sources, 110–11; themes of, 113*f*; warfare, 112–14, 119, 121–23; women in, 49
Termination rituals, 222, 344–46
Thompson, J. Eric, 21, 190

Three Rivers region, 58
Tikal: abandonment of, 65; Altar 7, 214; architecture, 147, 149; Calakmul victory, 37, 145, 199; and Caracol, 224, 310; and the collapse, 7; collapse of, 153, 213–14, 221; Dark Sun, 42, 214; defeat of, 90, 214; diplomacy, 42; dynastic expansion, 138; expansion of, 150; geopolitical ambition, 145; hiatus of, 36; historical sources from, 111; interfamily politics, 234; Jasaw Chan K'awiil, 95; Jasaw Chan K'awiil I, 199; Jasaw Chan K'awiil II, 214; Kaanul dynasty defeat, 94; last dates at, 351; and last date studies, 109; last monument, 61; monument erection hiatus, 58, 214; and Naachtun, 89–90, 95; and Nakum, 213; and Naranjo, 123; occupational gaps, 219; palaces at, 170; population declines, 58; recovery attempts, 61, 95; and regional politics, 3; royal army, 142, 144; star-war events, 224; state military monopoly, 145; stelae, 144*f,* 145, 214; and Teotihuacan, 249; Terminal Classic dating, 60; termination ritual, 345; warfare intensification, 145
Titles, 264–65, 352. *See also* Elite titles; Royal titles
Tobasco trading networks, 102
Tokovinine, Alexandre, 138
Tonina, 57–58, 61, 109, 346
Tozzer, Alfred M., 282, 295
Transformations, 269–70
Triadic arrangements and power, 260–61
Triangle Park, 202–3, 221

Uaxactun, 58, 161, 170
Ucanal, 41–42, 58, 61
Usumacinta area, 102. *See also* Piedras Negras
Uxbenka, 58
Uxmal: architecture, institutional, 149; ballcourt, 255; decline of, 266; defensive features, 62; emergence of, 7; growth of, 62; House of the Governor, 260–61, 262*f*; *k'uhul* affix presence, 265; long houses, 182; Monjas group, 259; Pajaros complex, 255, 259; power of, 62; Stela 14, 282–83; unfinished buildings, 62; Xiu stranger-kings, 252
Uxul: abandonment of, 86; and the Bat dynasty, 90–92, 95, 99; and the Kaanul dynasty, 93; and Naachtun, 90–92; stelae, 90–92, 94–95; and the Suutz' dynasty, 104

Vanderbilt projects, 341
Vaughan, Patrick, 66
Vázquez López, Verónica, 101
Vessel gifting, 123

Warfare: Aguateca, 66, 70–71, 83, 354–55; and architecture, 147; captures for sacrifice, 142, 143*f*; Caracol-Naranjo, 229; ceramics depicting, 355; and Chichen Itza, 274–75, 284; Classic period events, 37–39; and the collapse, 37, 77–78, 83–84, 354–55; and Copán's fall, 77–78; divine kingship, as ending, 65, 84, 309–10, 355; and dynastic crises, 37, 50; and dynastic kingship ruptures, 44–48, 50; eastern central lowlands, 112–14; and elite power, 140, 147, 150; elites' involvement in, 83–84, 147; evidence for, 64–65; increases in, 38–39, 50, 145; kings conducting, 141–45, 147; and kingship changes, 84–85; language of, 37, 112–13; Petexbatun region, 66, 341; and political collapse, 145, 341; records of, 37–40, 64, 84, 147; and royal investiture rituals, 142; and sociopolitical change, 147; star-war events, 38*f,* 224, 229–30, 234, 244; state monopolies on, 145; in Terminal Classic texts, 112–14, 119, 121–23; women and, 71–72. *See also* Caracol, warfare; Ceibal, warfare; Star-war events
Warrior figurines, 307–8
Warrior iconography, 274–75, 284
Warrior imagery, spread of, 140–41
Warrior queens, 71–72
Wat'ul K'atel stelae, 61
Weaponry: Aguateca, 67, 70–71, 80; atlatl darts, 83; bifacial points, 80; bow-and-arrow technology, 83; Ceibal, 80–83; chert *versus* obsidian points, 72; Copán, 72–78; Copán Valley, 75–78, 83; exchange systems, 78; spears, 83; studies of, 64–66; as warfare evidence, 80–82
Webster, David, 76, 110
Weiss-Krejci, Estella, 157
White, Christine, 292–93
Widmer, Randolph, 162
Willey, Gordon, 354
Women, 71–72, 161–62
Wren, Linnea, 295

Xkalumkin, 55
Xkanha, 62
Xkipche, 62
Xultun, 61, 115
Xunantunich, 59–61, 86, 229, 345
Xutilha, 109

Yaxche Xlapak, 62
Yaxchilan: dynastic collapse, 57; El Palmar royal titles at, 192, 194; hieroglyphic stairway, 38, 118; last monument, 350; Piedras Negras conflict, 57; state military monopoly, 145; termination ritual, 345; war narratives from, 38
Yaxha, 59, 86, 203, 220
Yax Pasaj Chan Yopaat, 41
Yucatan Peninsula: continuity in, 60; kingship in, 249–51, 266, 267n1; and last date studies, 109; stranger-kings, 250–55

Zacpeten, 219–20
Zapote Bobal, 136, 137*f*
Źrałka, Jarosław, 60

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